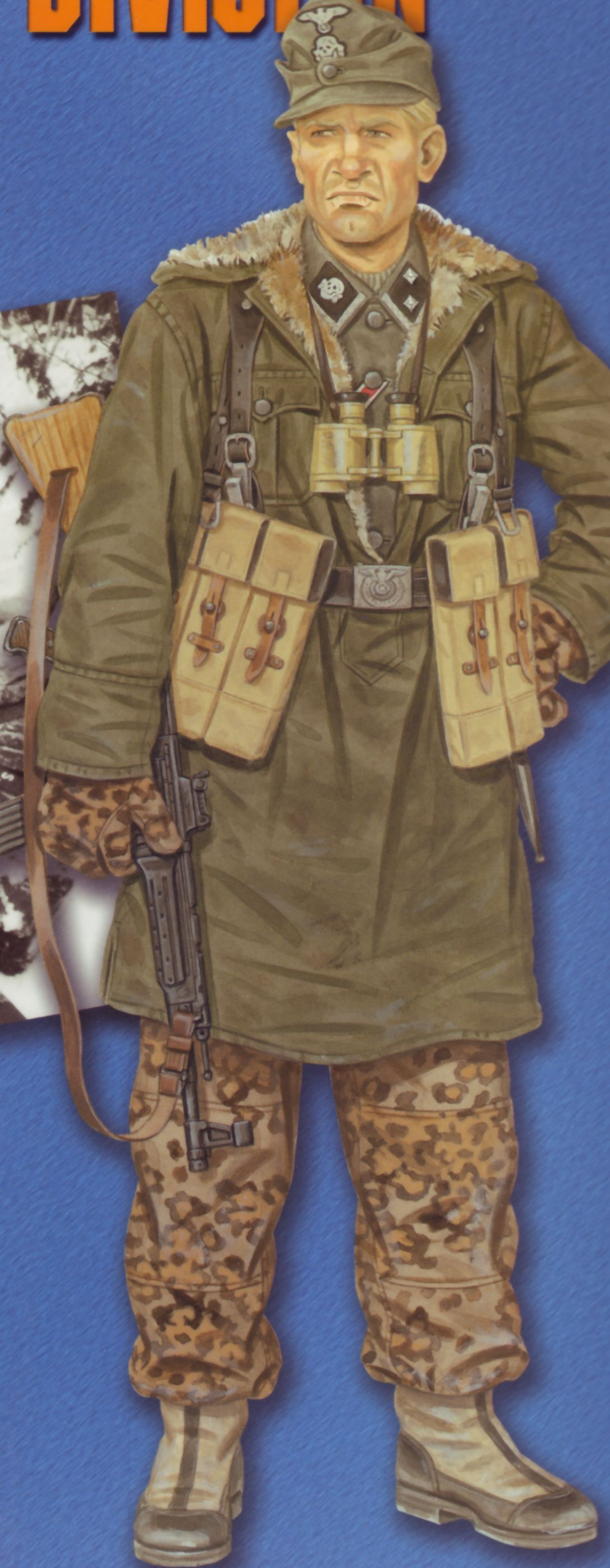
6506

March of the DEATH'S HEAD DIVISION

Paul Thomas & Stephen Andrew



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INTRODUCTION

In addition to the *Verfügungstruppe*, there was another full-time armed SS formation in Germany prior to the outbreak of war in 1939. It was composed of the so-called SS-*Totenkopfverbände*, or SS Death's Head detachments, which guarded the concentration camps. The first of these units was established, late in 1933, at Dachau by SS *Standartenführer* Theodor Eicke. Over the next few years that followed Eicke officially became Inspector of Concentration Camps and Commander of the SS Death's Head detachments. He then set about firmly establishing his new force and reorganised and enlarged the *Totenkopfverbände* into five numbered *Sturmbanne*: I '*Oberbayern*', II '*Elbe*', III '*Sacksen*', IV '*Ostfriesland*', and V '*Brandenburg*'. By 1937 the five battalions were again reorganised, this time into three *Standarten*, which carried the designations '*Oberbayern*', '*Brandenburg*', and '*Thüringen*'. In addition to their guard duties, the *Totenkopf* formations participated along with the *Verfügungstruppe* in the occupations of Austria, the *Sudetenland*, and Czechoslovakia. A number of *Totenkopf Truppen* also provided military training for members of the *Allgemeine*-SS who were to be mobilised as 'police reinforcements' in the event of war. When war finally came in September 1939, around 40,000 *Allgemeine*-SS reservists were called up to fill more than a dozen new *Totenkopfstandarten*.

After the extensive training and preparation, when the *Totenkopfverbände* finally went to war in 1939 against Poland they were not in fact used for combat. Instead the three *Totenkopfverbände* regiments *Oberbayern, Thüringen* and *Brandenburg*, under Eicke's command were primarily used as *Einsatzgruppen*. *Oberbayern* and *Thüringen* were sent into the 10.Armee area of operations located between Upper Silesia and the Vistula south of Warsaw. *Brandenburg* followed the 8.Armee through Poznan and west central Poland. Across the country the *Totenkopfverbände Einsatzgruppen* unleashed a reign of terror and did not simply limit themselves to the liquidation of the polish leadership either, but extended its brutal treatment on innocent civilians or groups that did not fit into Nazi ideology. When the original *Totenkopfstandarten* left a defeated Poland in late October 1939, they were replaced by the new *Totenkopfverbände*, which included the 12.*Standarte*, which behaved with the same savage action on the population of Poland.

When Eicke returned from Poland to Dachau he immediately set to work organising the conversion of the *Totenkopfverbände* into the *Totenkopf*-Division. *Totenkopf* had been designated as motorised. The infantry regiments were divided into three battalions, of four companies each. There were also two replacement companies for each regiment. The artillery regiment was divided into three battalions: two light artillery, and one heavy. Each artillery battalion had three batteries and each battery had four guns. The tank destroyer and engineer battalion both had three companies and the reconnaissance battalion consisted of two motorcycle companies and an armoured car platoon. The signals battalion was divided into a telephone communications and a radio company.

In February 1940, the Army High Command finally assigned *Totenkopf* its role in the forthcoming Western campaign. However, it would not be in the vanguard of the assault. Instead it was assigned to the 2.Armee, an untrained reserve force composed of newly formed infantry divisions and *Totenkopf*. On 9 May 1940, the 2.Armee signalled Eicke to have *Totenkopf*-Division on full alert. The following day as German tanks rolled across the Dutch and Belgian borders, *Totenkopf* troops waited in anticipation to move across into enemy territory to begin the war in the West.

Totenkopf was included in the reserves of Hr.Gr.A, but owing to the rapid success of its formations, *Totenkopf* was finally released to the main advance on 17 May 1940. The Division was ordered across the southern Netherlands, through Belgium into France to link up with General Hermann Hoth's 15.Panzer-Division Korps, which included the 5. and 7.Panzer-Divisions. During its advance *Totenkopf* encountered no enemy, due to the fact that Hr.Gr.C had pushed back both British and French forces further west. It was not until 19 May that *Totenkopf* encountered its first enemy formations towards the village of Le Cateaux. Here the men of *Totenkopf* fought with courage and zeal, fighting its way through the village in a series of vicious house-to-house battles. By mid-morning of 20 May, *Totenkopf* had cleared the areas to the north and east of Cambrai and taken 16,000 prisoners and a large amount of battlefield booty. *Totenkopf* had also taken its first wartime combat casualties, with 16 dead and 53 wounded.

Over the next few days *Totenkopf* continued to display skill and tenacity on the battlefield. Its antitank companies were particularly effective at causing considerable casualties and heavy losses against British tanks. Persistently *Totenkopf* pushed forwards, pressing against the weakening British positions that were reluctantly withdrawing towards Dunkirk. Once the British forces had retreated into relative safety of the Dunkirk perimeter, *Totenkopf* was then ordered to halt in order to allow the *Luftwaffe* to complete the first phase of the battle for France.

The Division was then briefly pulled out of the line and sent for a period of occupation duties around Boulogne. From there it was ordered south to participate in the final defeat of the French Army. Essentially its main duties were to mop-up the remaining French forces. Between 17 and 19 June, the Division captured 6088 prisoners at a cost of 5 killed and 13 wounded. However, by the end of the French campaign the *Totenkopf*-Division had itself suffered extremely heavy casualties for its considerable courage and resilience in combat. A total of 1152 soldiers, more than 10 percent of the unit's combat strength, had been lost.

After months of hard training and periods of rest and rebuilding, *Totenkopf* was ready to take part in the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941. The Division had been transformed since the battle for France, motorised infantry regiments had, for instance, been converted into self-contained *Kampfgruppen*, thus giving them more flexibility on the battlefield. Its flak capability too was expanded with the allotment of a number of 15cm heavy artillery pieces, a motorised reserve battalion was also established.

For the opening attack on the Red Army, *Totenkopf* was attached to Erich Hoepner's 4.Panzer-Gruppe, which would be the vanguard of *Feld Marshall* Wilhelm Ritter von Leeb's H.Gr.Nord. However, as with the French campaign, Eicke's Death's Head would once again have to wait in reserve. The Division were not brought out of reserve until the night of 24/25 June 1941, where it was given orders to cross the border and clear the Lithuanian forests around Jurbarkas. From there it drove to the Dvina, and by 27 June, the reconnaissance battalion made the first serious contact with the Red Army forces. Upon reaching the Dvina, *Totenkopf* was assigned to Manstein's 56.Panzer-Korps and given the task of guarding the Korps flank and maintaining contact with the 16.Armee to the south. *Totenkopf's* drive was very successful and after just 10 days of fighting had reached the Luga Line, the last Soviet defence line before Leningrad. However, in the face of the *Totenkopf* stood suicidal Russian resistance. For days both *Totenkopf* and Red Army forces clashed in a bitter contest of attrition. The *Totenkopf* once again displayed feats of stupendous heroism and soon crushed enemy resistance, which subsequently led to 8 Red Army divisions being destroyed.

In September 1941 *Totenkopf* was transferred to the 2.Armee-Korps and was soon embroiled in the battle for Lushno. During this fierce battle, which saw Lushno change hands four times in just one single day, *Totenkopf* soldiers finally drove the Soviets out of the village. Although this was a great victory for the Death's Head, it had left them much weakened in strength. 16km east of Lushno, the Division hit new Russian defensive positions and it ground to a halt almost at once. All across the front, the German offensive was drawing to a halt as winter settled in. *Totenkopf* and the rest of the 16.Armee began to dig in. For the next few months the *Totenkopf*-Division went over to the defensive south of Lake Ilmen along with 2.Armee-Korps.

In January 1942 Red Army forces renewed further attacks in the midst of the blizzards, during which the temperature had dropped to below –40 degrees Celsius. The offensive was directed against H.Gr.Nord southern flank. Desperately *Totenkopf* was rushed in to help stiffen the areas of the front from collapse. Five battalions, including the reconnaissance and engineer battalions and part of the artillery regiment were rushed to the front. By February 1942 it appeared that the core of the *Totenkopf* including 2. and 10.Armee-Korps would soon be constricted in a pocket around the town of Demyansk. Both Waffen-SS and *Wehrmacht* troops fought in chest-deep snow in temperatures that averaged –30 degrees Celsius. Yet, they were ordered not to retreat one step back. Instead the soldiers fought to the death, whilst the Soviets committed their remaining reserves in a final effort to crush the pocket. Casualties were massive on both sides and *Totenkopf* was on the verge of destruction. Throughout March, the battle continued to rage, in spite of a relief attempt and a proposed breakout of the pocket. It was not until 22 April 1942 that a bridgehead was finally established between the troops in the Demyansk pocket and the rest of H.Gr.Nord. The survival of the *Totenkopf* in the Demyansk pocket was a great achievement and contributed significantly to the stabilisation of the German position around Lake Ilmen. However, Eicke's division was in a terrible condition and needed urgent replacements in order for it to continue on the battlefield. In May 1942 all *Totenkopf* received in terms of replacements was 3000 ill-trained reservists from Germany to help bolster its badly depleted force.

In July 1942, as the great German summer offensive in southern Russia pushed towards the Caucasus, *Totenkopf* were once again subjected to continual Red Army attacks in the Demyansk salient. The Division once again demonstrated its skill and courage in the face of adversity and kept open the corridor. In spite of appalling losses, the Soviets attacked again in August. Hitler told Eicke in no uncertain words 'That the army would hold Demyansk to the last drop of SS blood'. For the next two months *Totenkopf* fought a bitter attrition until October 1942, when the remnants of the Division were finally pulled out of the line on the Eastern Front and put on trains for Germany for a complete overhaul and refit.

Totenkopf was re-equipped with the formation of a panzer battalion, largely consisting of Pz.Kpfw.III's and Pz.Kpfw.IV's. It also received a battalion of assault guns and a company of Tiger tanks. The Division's antiaircraft capability was increased as well. But in spite of the Division's re-fit, it was far from adequate. Even by the beginning of January 1943 it had fewer than half the vehicles required and had not received its Tigers. At the end of January the Division arrived at Kiev and was ordered eastwards to Poltava, to join other crack Waffen-SS divisions, the *Liebstandarte* and *Das Reich*. Together this elite force became part of SS-*Obergruppenführer* Paul Hausser's 1.SS-Panzer-Korps. In February the 1.SS-Panzer-Korps was given the task of recapturing the city of Kharkov. On 5 March 1943, *Totenkopf* and *Das Reich* linked up with Hoth's 4.Panzer-Armee for an offensive to take the city. The vanguard of *Das Reich* reached the western outskirts of Kharkov on 9 March 1943, whilst *Totenkopf* were sent around the northern edge to block off any Soviet retreat. Whilst SS troops were sent into the city to crush enemy resistance, *Totenkopf* completed the encirclement of Kharkov. By 18 March, the entire Panzer-Korps drove the final Soviet units out of the city.

Three months later, with spirits greatly revived after the victory of Kharkov, elite Waffen-SS forces once again saw extensive action this time at Kursk. 'Operation Zitadelle', the largest tank battle in history, opened at 0350 hours on 5 July 1943. Once again under Hausser's command, the 1.SS-Panzer-Korps on the southern half of the Kursk's salient, ripped through formidable enemy defensive works. However, within hours the were entangled in heavy fighting. Although over the next few days th attack went extremely well, *Totenkopf* forces along with their SS counter parts were constantly up against strong enemy resistance, in spite o penetrating deepest into the salient. By 13 July, with huge losse mounting, Hitler officially cancelled Zitadelle so as to free up the S divisions.

Totenkopf, like so many other German formations that fought a Kursk, would never again possess anything like the strength it had at th beginning of the summer of 1943. *Totenkopf* were exhausted. They ha lost more than half its vehicles and taken huge casualties. The Divisio was pulled back with remnants of the *Leibstandarte* and *Das Reich* to th relative calm of Kharkov. However, the Red Army did not allow them an respite and launched a series of heavy attacks. For over a week *Das Reic* and *Totenkopf* held the Soviet armored spearheads and prevented the reaching the Dnieper. But under huge enemy pressure Kharkov soon fe and the two Waffen-SS divisions were compelled to withdraw. For th next few months there was no respite, and although *Totenkopf* wer shuttled from one point of crisis to another, they were slowly pushe back. By October 1943, *Totenkopf* had been designated a Panze Division. However, they did not receive any significant amount of fres armor and men. Within a month the Division contained three fu battalions of panzer grenadiers, one weak battalion of tanks, som artillery and flak, and half the strength of its engineer battalion. Over th next several months *Totenkopf* was used as a defensive barrier against th massive battering arm of the Red Army, as it moved towards the wester borders of the Soviet Union. As German troops fell back, *Totenko* protected the withdrawal.

As H.Gr.Mitte disintegrated, following the Soviet offensive in Jun 1944, *Totenkopf* was moved north to join the 4.Armee. There it defende the city of Grodno for 11 days, out-numbered seven to one in troops an ten to one in tanks. However, by 18 July it withdrew west in the retre towards Warsaw. It halted north east of the Polish capital where *Totenko* and the 5.SS-Panzer-Division Wiking held to the grim death. For thre solid months this elite band of SS troops defended its positions aroun Warsaw with everything it could muster.

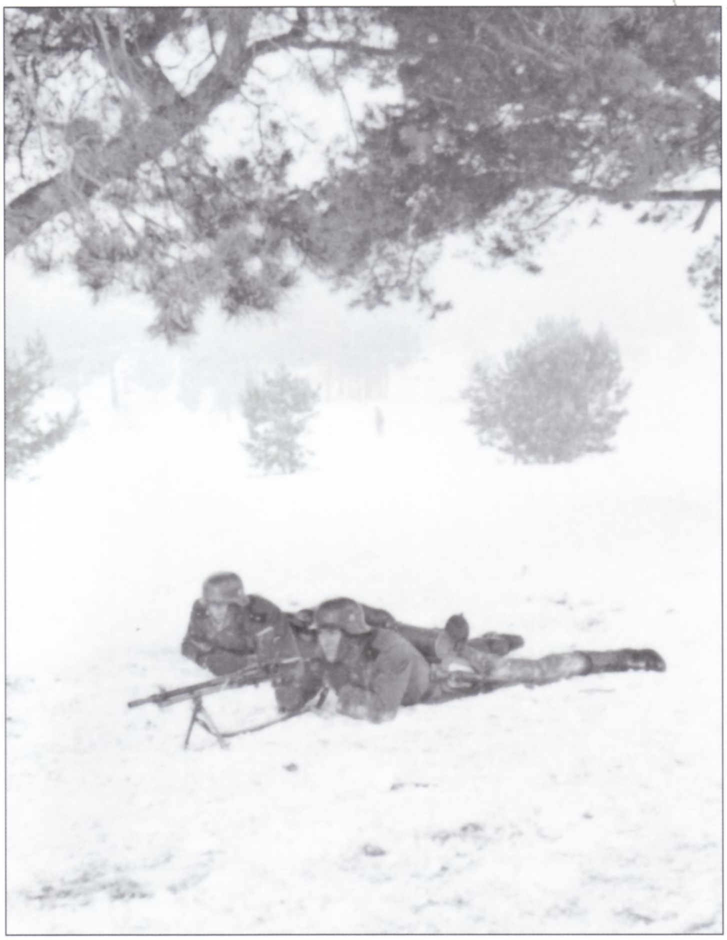
Totenkopf's performance against the Red Army in Poland had n gone unnoticed, and as Hitler's attention turned towards relieving th Hungarian capital, Budapest, he immediately called for the Divisio Both *Totenkopf* and Wiking launched their attack towards Budapest o New Year's Day 1945, but they were immediately stalled in the face stiff resistance. On 11 February the Red Army captured Budapest, an Hitler wasted no time to begin an offensive, codenamed 'Operatio Spring Awakening', with an objective of recapturing the city. Th offensive opened on 6 March in heavy snow. In spite of the terribl conditions, *Totenkopf* and their Waffen-SS counter-parts fought the batt with their customary determination and élan. Soviet resistanc immediately hindered their advance and casualties mounted hourly. Soo the Waffen-SS found themselves surrounded and being ground down in battle of attrition. In spite of Hitler's hysterical demands that the Waffe SS stand fast, *Totenkopf* and the remnants of the 4.SS-Panzer-Korp broke out westwards. The 6.SS-Panzer-Armee began a general retre towards the Austrian frontier.

What was left of *Totenkopf* withdrew up to Bratislava and Vienn with remnants of 6.SS-Panzer-Armee. On 3 April 1945, *Totenkopf* halte in the southern suburbs of Vienna and put up a symbolic resistance again two Soviet fronts converging on the city. Ten days later Vienna fell. As f the *Totenkopf*, they took their surviving units to Lintz. It final surrendered to American forces on 8 May 1945.

All images in this book are from the Bundesarchiv in Koblenz an from the HITM Archive.

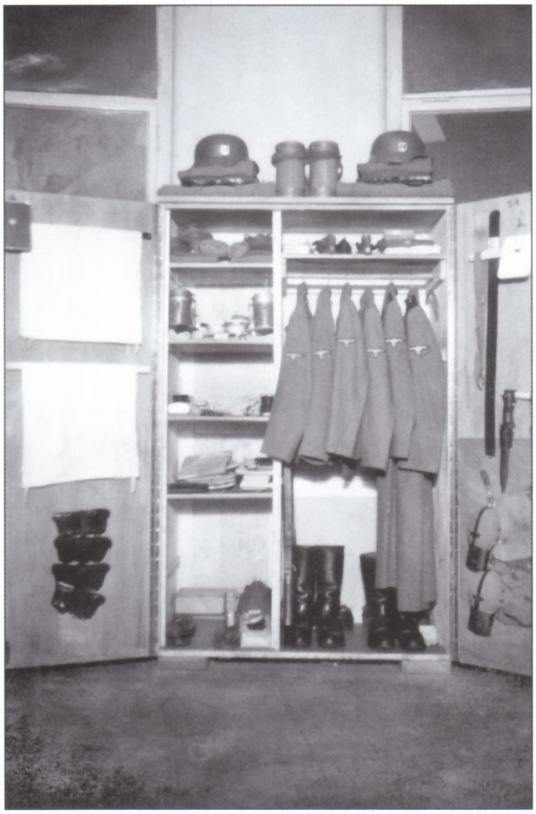
Ian Baxter

A long column of troops belonging to the newly formed *Totenkopf-Division* seen here on exercise in the winter of 1939. The men are all wearing packs with rolled blankets and the standard army issue great coat, but with *Totenkopf* insignia sewn onto the collars. It is interesting to note the uniformity of height. Initially, all recruits joining the SS had to be at least 178cm tall and of the highest physical fitness.



A *Totenkopf* MG26(t) machine gunner and loader practising with their potent weapon in the snow. A typical MG squad of this period consisted of a four-man crew with the two least experienced recruits bringing up fresh ammunition for the gun. Great emphasis was placed on the SS machine gunners finding the most advantageous defensive positions in order to halt an enemy advance.

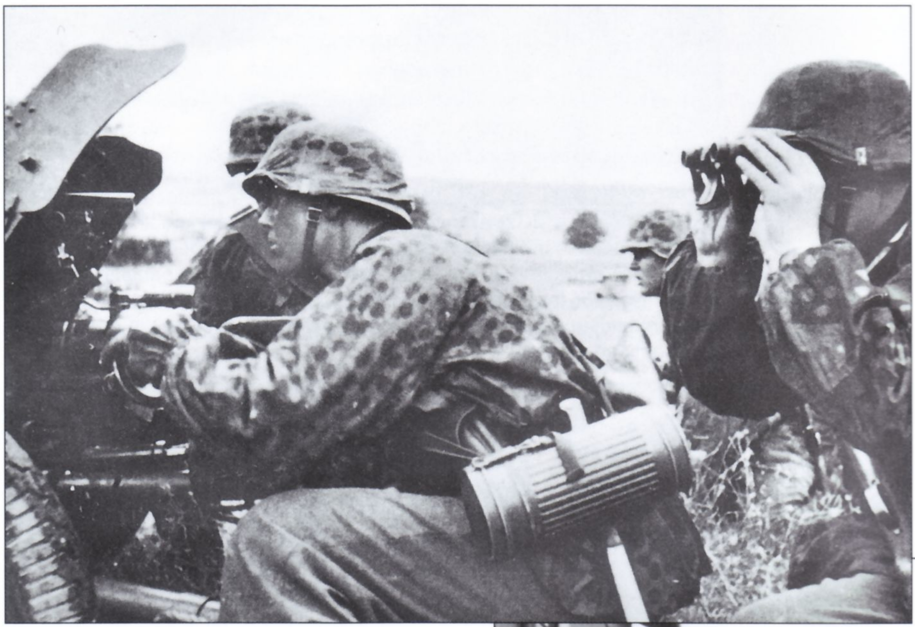
Totenkopf troops being led by their commanding officer in front of intrigued German spectators. In December 1939 *Totenkopf* was ordered to Ludwigsberg, just north of Stuggart, and placed in the second-line reserve for the attack in the West.



A typical SS wardrobe displays hanging tunics and two pairs of black boots. Aluminium mess tins and other items of kit can also be seen. On top of the wardrobe two M1935 steel helmets sit neatly on pressed and folded kit, either side of corrugated gas mask holders.

Troops of the *Totenkopf*-Division march westwards to the Belgian frontier on 12 May 1940. They waited for another four days before being committed to battle. They were assigned to H.Gr.A and were given plans to strike across southern Holland, through Belgium and into France to link up with General Hoth's 15.Panzer-Korps.

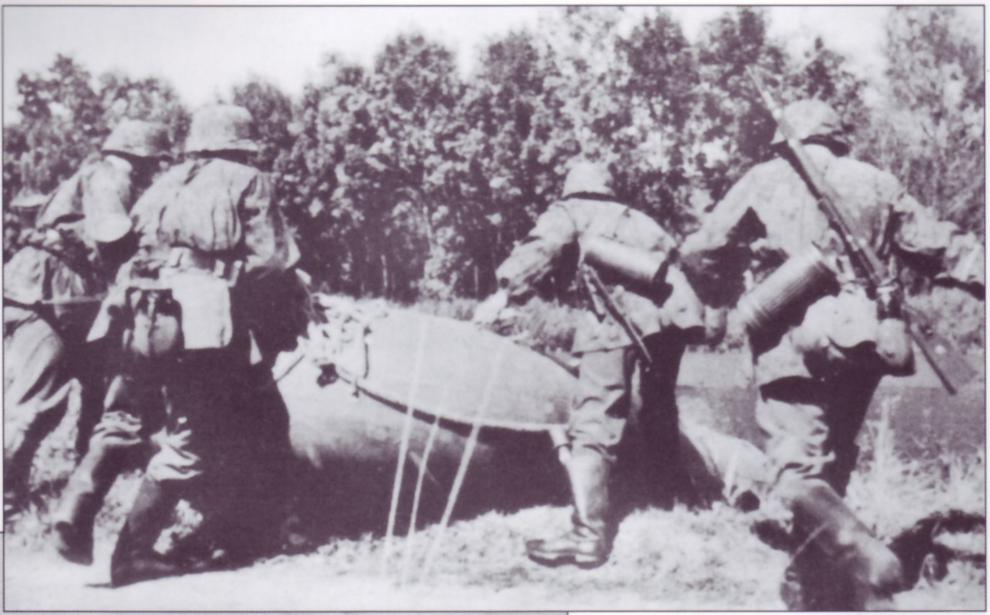
Passing destroyed vehicles of the French Army *Totenkopf* soldiers move on north and east of Cambrai. Although *Totenkopf* had incurred its first wartime combat losses, with 16 dead and 53 wounded, it had in fact relieved the pressure on Rommel's 7.Panzer-Division and allowed General Hoth's 15.Panzer-Korps to continue its rapid advance through France. It was here along these dusty French roads that *Totenkopf* became stuck in huge traffic jams in the area around Cambrai and Artois.

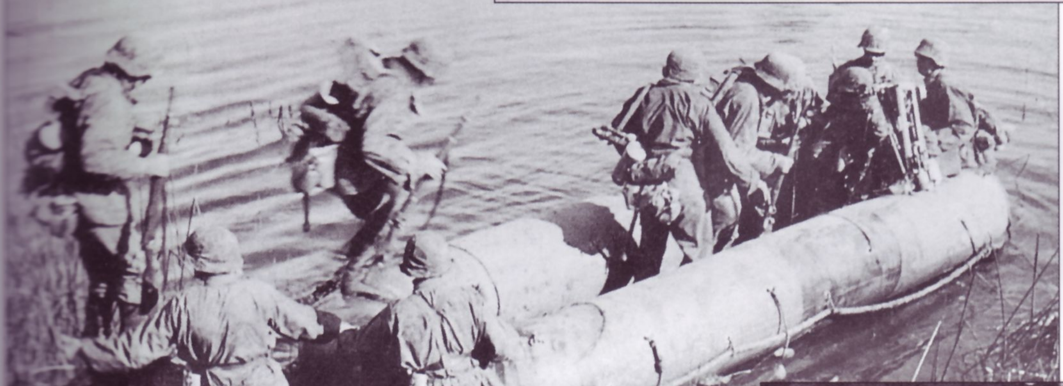


A 3.7cm Pak35/36 anti-tank gun seen on 20 May 1940 with its crew. Although the Pak35/36 proved successful during the Polish campaign, when it was confronted with more heavily armored British and French tanks in 1940, *Totenkopf* Pak crews often watched in horror as their armor piercing rounds bounced off the enemy tanks, even at point blank range.

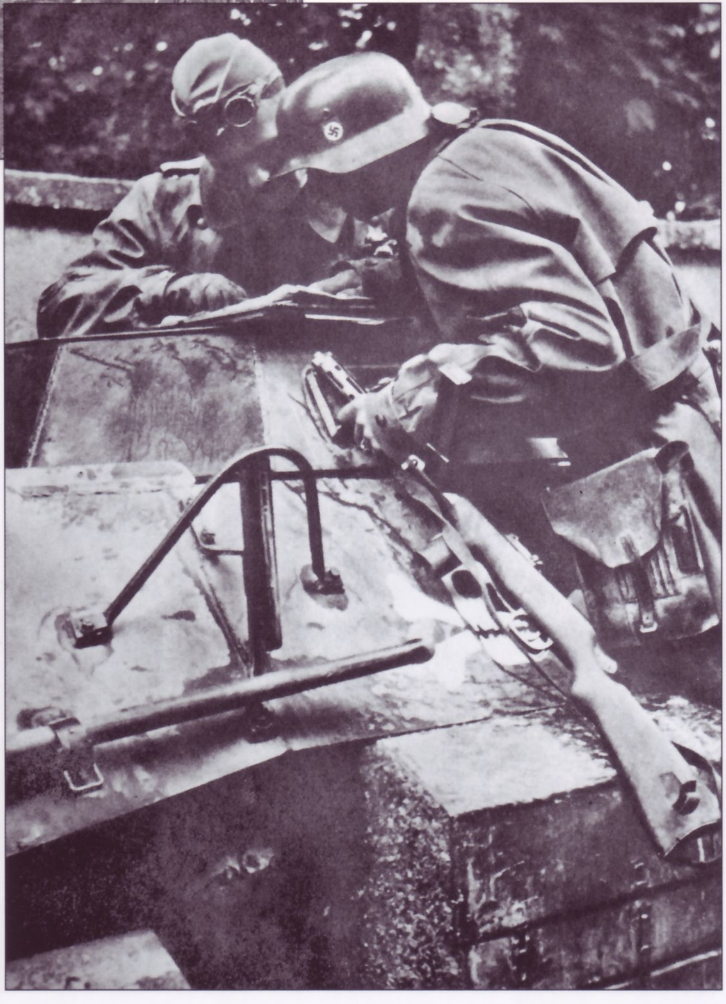
Totenkopf, probably from the Eicke Regiment, rest in a ruined French town near Arras. It was here in this area on 21 May 1940 that *Totenkopf* sustained a heavy mauling by both British and French forces. In spite of sustaining heavy losses *Totenkopf* resumed its advance and pushed forward towards the town of Bethune, along the banks of the La Bassee Canal. This was a natural defensive barrier and when *Totenkopf* entered the town to cross the canal it was met by a spirited British defense and forced to retreat. It was not until 24 May that parts of the 3.*Infanterie*-Regiment led personally by Theodor Eicke finally crossed down stream and established a bridgehead.

Men of the *Totenkopf*-Division manhandle a rubber dinghy down to the water during fighting with British forces along the line of the La Bassee Canal. The soldiers are dressed in M37 tunics and trousers, under an early, first-type smock worn green side outermost.

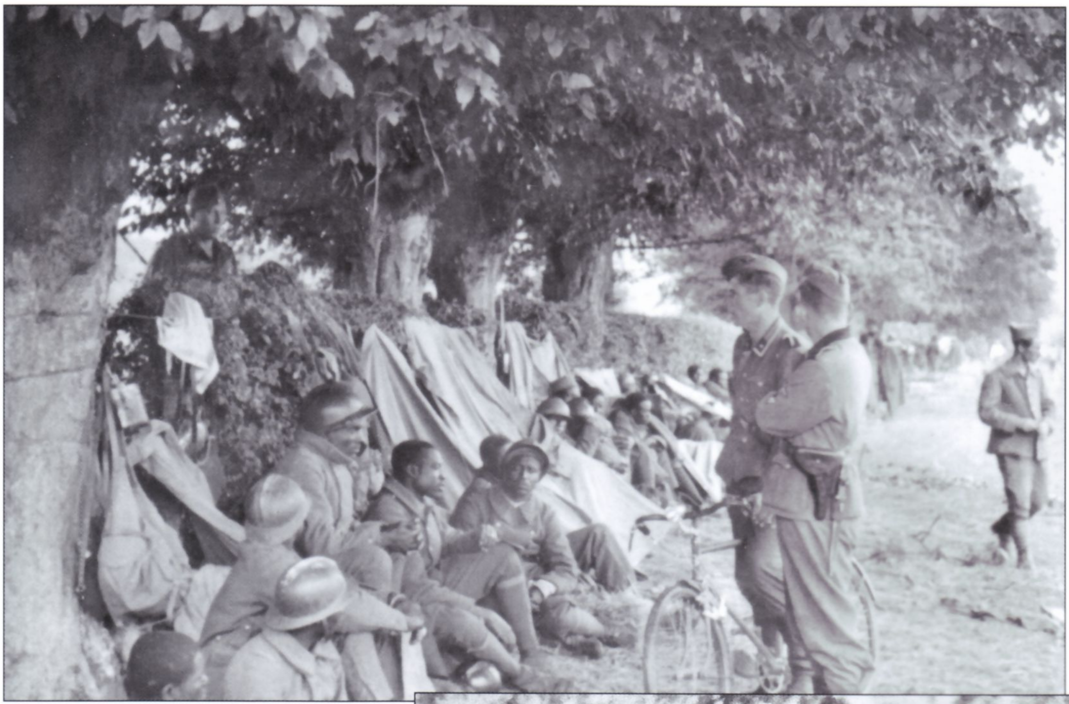




Totenkopf troops clamber inside a dinghy during an unopposed canal crossing in May 1940. This photograph clearly demonstrates how vulnerable the men would be if they were to come under intensive enemy fire. It was along the La Bassee Canal, a natural defensive position, that the British had retired behind and trained their guns. *Totenkopf* troops then had to reconnoitre the area and find a suitable crossing point.

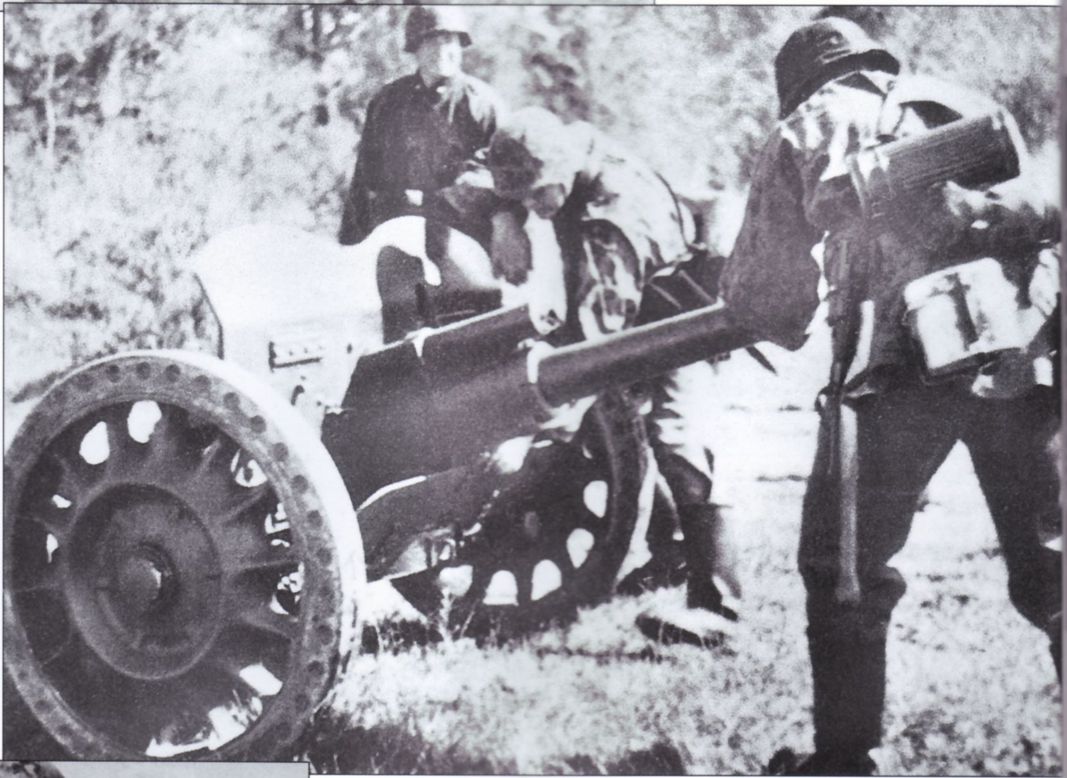


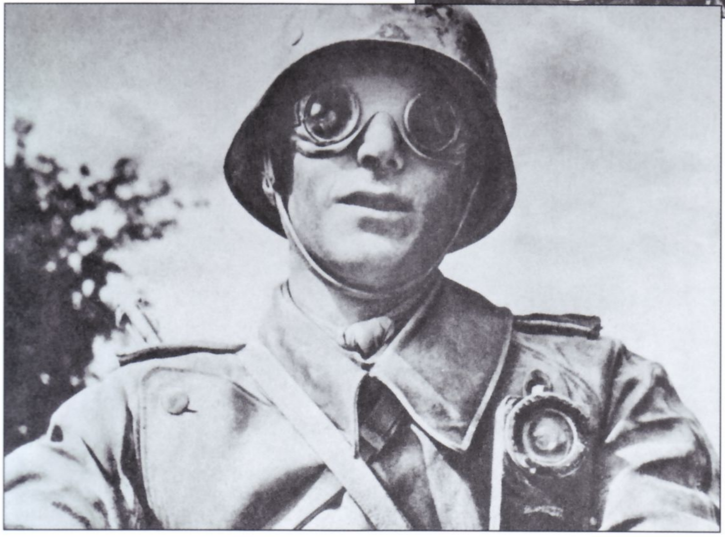
Two *Totenkopf* soldiers consult a map on top of an Sd.Kfz.221 light armored car near the La Bassee Canal. It was near here that frustrated *Totenkopf* troops, who had suffered heavy casualties against stiff British opposition, were ordered to murder 97 men of the Royal Norfolk Regiment who had been taken prisoner. SS *Obersturmführer* Fritz Knöchlein, the senior officer present, ordered the British prisoners to be led across a road and into a barnyard, where they were subsequently machine-gunned in cold blood.



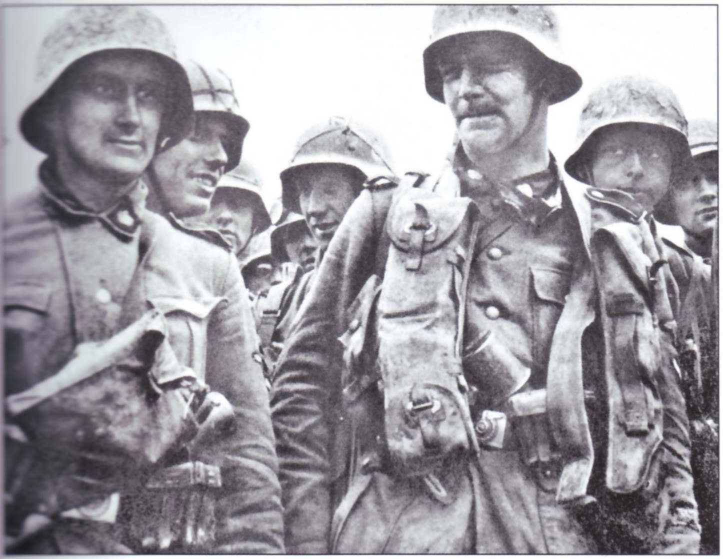
Men of 1.*Infanterie*-Regiment commanded by *Standartenführer* Ma Simon, are seen here with capture Moroccan troops. This *Totenkop* Regiment had crossed the Sambr River and advanced towards L Cateaux and Cambrai, where it sa fighting with Moroccan forces. It shoul be noted that the first day's fightin against the Moroccan units only sa about 100 of them captured. Mos surrendering Africans were simply sho out of hand, being considered 'sub-humans'.

Totenkopf troops are seen here examining a Puteaux mle 1937 47mm French antitank gun. After the fall of France, large amounts of captured French equipment were widely used for a variety of tasks. During the initial stages of the invasion of the Soviet Union in June 1941, *Totenkopf* had employed captured French armored vehicles and artillery on the battlefield.

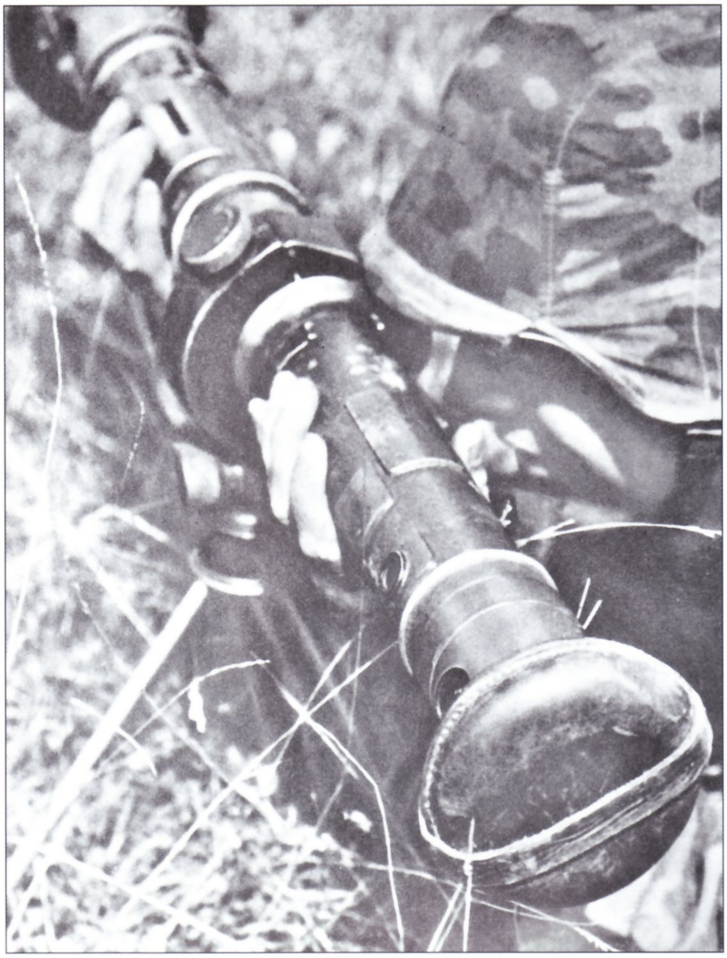




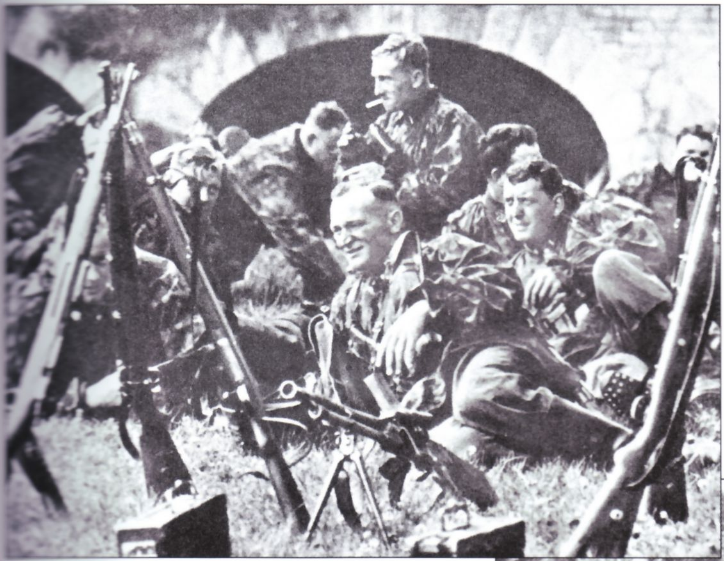
A *Totenkopf* motorcyclist in France in late May 1940. Due to the hot, dry weather dust was a particular hindrance, especially with motorcyclists. This motorcyclist has been issued with aviator goggles, which were an essential part of kit on the dusty French roads. He can also be seen wearing the standard *Wehrmacht* motorcycle coat, which were dark blue/green in color.



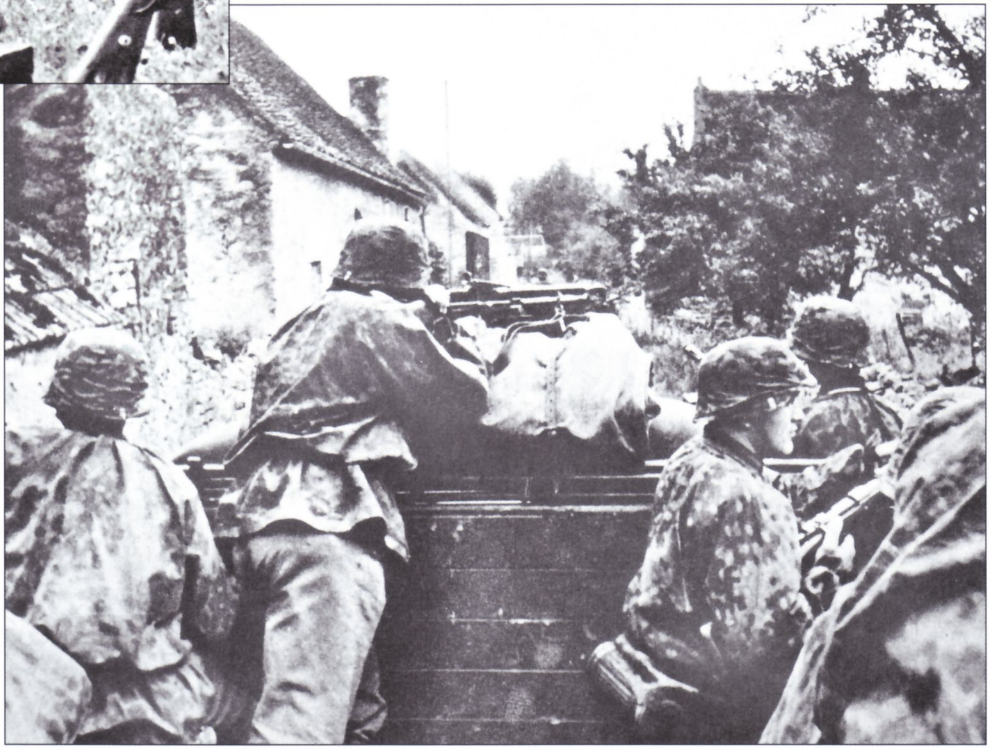
Totenkopf troops seen during a lull in the fighting in France. Note that these soldiers are wearing army issue tunics. This was due to the fact that following expansion of the new SS divisions in 1939 there were not enough special SS tunics to go round. Consequently the troops wore a mixture of dress until after the French campaign, when the wearing of the standard army tunics became universal throughout the SS. Note the *Totenkopf`s* special collar patches displaying the distinctive Death's Head.



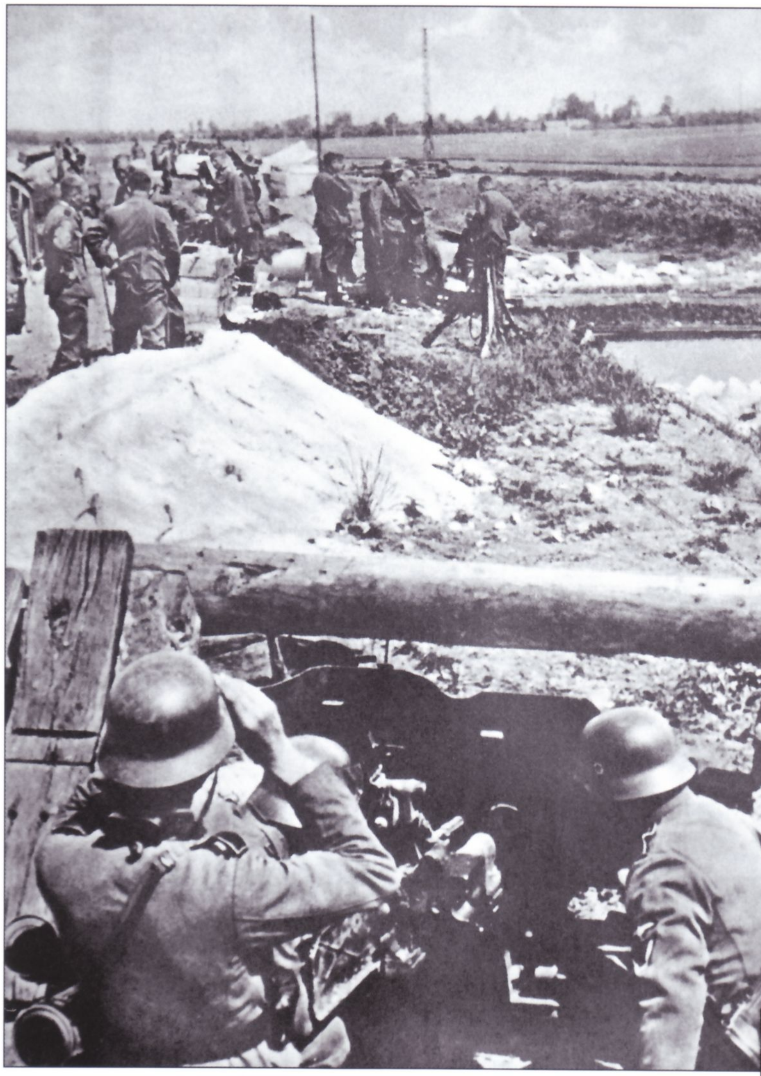
A *Totenkopf* gunner in a forward observation post uses an optical range finder to correct fire for an artillery battery, should rounds fall short or over the target, his task was to advise on the corrections needed to hit his target. An observation post would necessarily be within sight of the target to give accurate ranging information, which is why the soldier is concealed in long grass.



A group of *Totenkopf* troops rest near a position outside Boulogne. The Division had been temporarily pulled out of the line in late May 1940, and for a time deployed around the French town. The soldiers are all seen wearing M37 tunics and trousers, under an early, first-type smock.

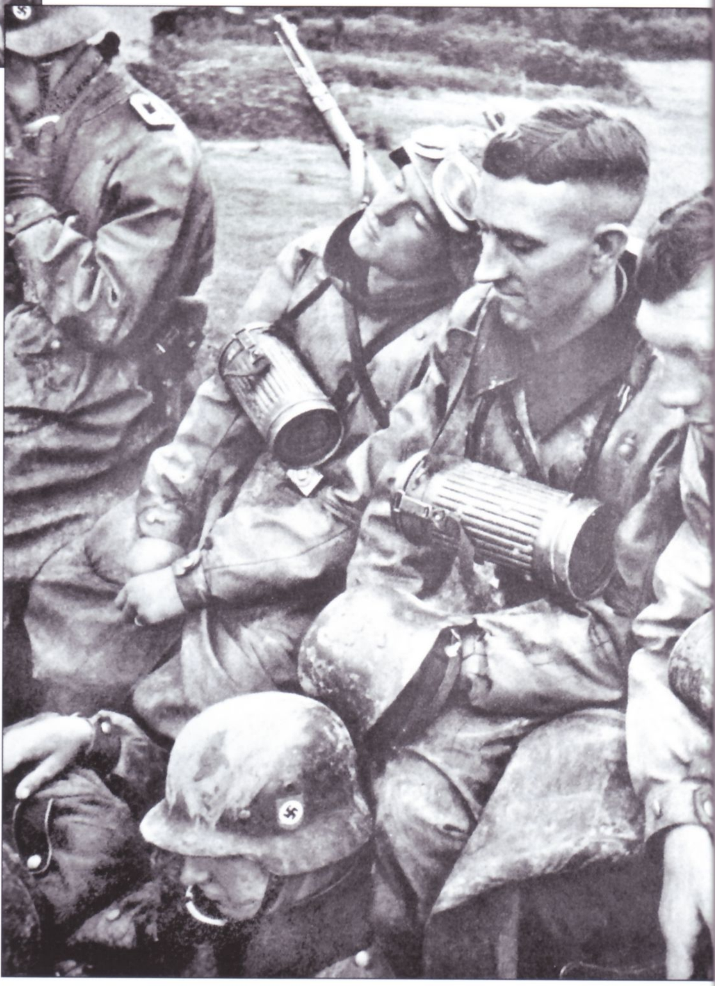


A group of *Totenkopf* troops during a firefight inside a French village in a late May 1940. They appear to have utilised an unidentified vehicle as a defensive position along a road. Note the camouflage smocks worn by these soldiers, which are predominantly green for spring and summer use. The patterns of these smocks varied widely, but a combination of leaf shapes and spots were characteristic.



A well-concealed *Totenkopf* 3.7cm Pak35/36 antitank gun overlooks enemy positions near Arras on 21 May 1940. At the time the *Totenkopf* motorised reconnaissance battalion created a towed antitank platoon equipped with the 3.7cm Pak35/36. Although the gun was reasonably successful in France, its solid shot could not, however, penetrate the thick armor of French Char B and British Matilda tanks.

Totenkopf engineers construct a makeshift wooden bridg during the French campaign. An inflatable dinghy has been presse into service to help with the construction.

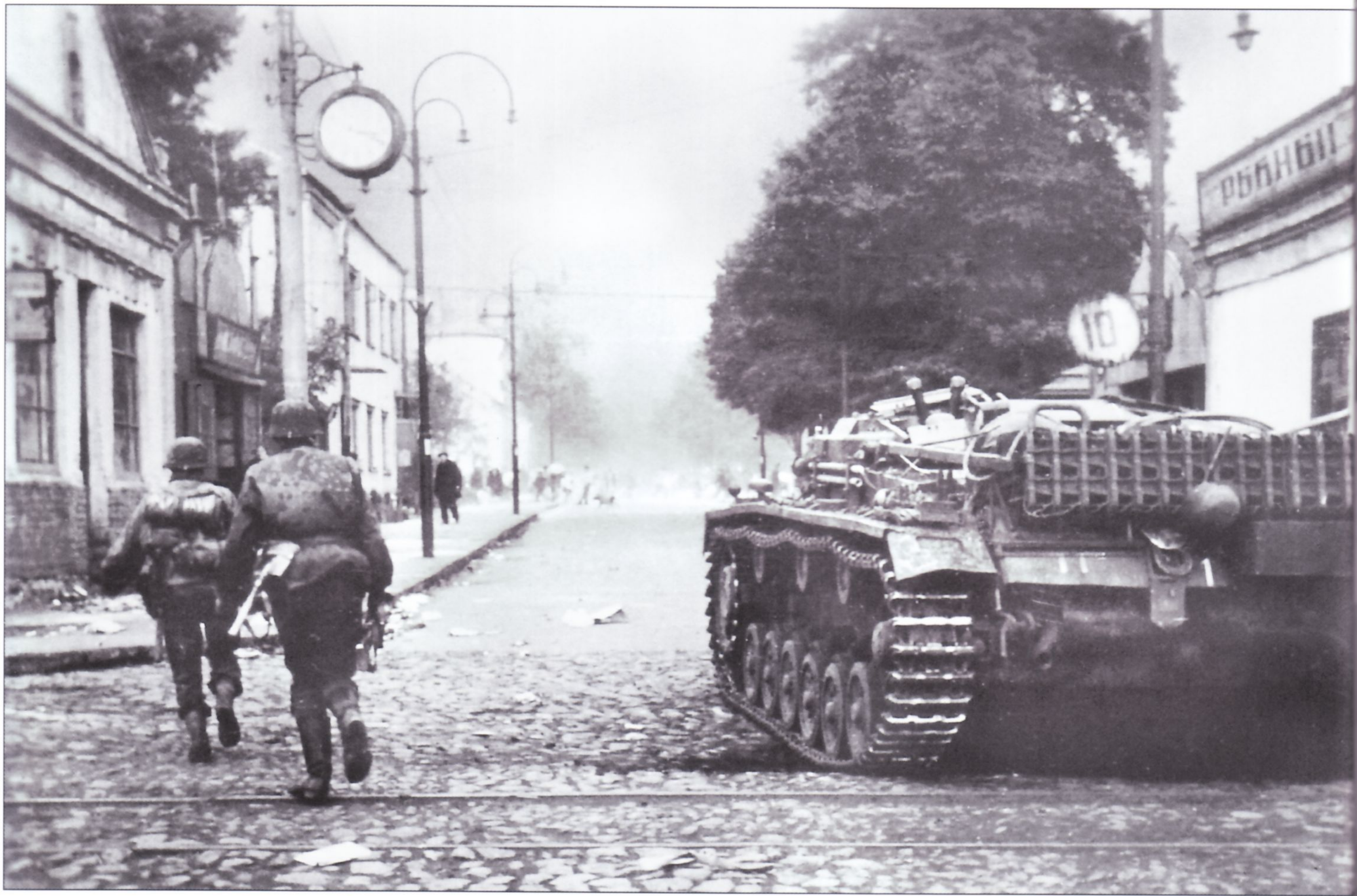


A group of motorcyclists from an unidentified *Totenkopf* regiment pause for a much-needed rest during its advance through France in early June 1940. They are all wearing the standard double-breasted rubberized motorcycle coat, which have been soiled in mud and dirt. Three of the motorcyclists are wearing the M35/40 steel helmet with slate grey finish applied. Note the distinctive SS shield painted on the left side of the steel helmet. In the field the realities of combat in France led to many SS soldiers dulling their helmets by daubing them with mud. Soldiers found that getting rid of the shiny surface of the helmet reduced the risk of detection whilst under cover. The SS runes and National Party decals were also smeared and concealed with mud.

A light armored car supported by motorcycle combinations drive through a ruined town during reconnaissance operations in early June 1940, during this period *Totenkopf* had been ordered to move southwards to participate in the final defeat of the French Army and the Division took part in the pursuit of the French armies south of the Marne from 14 June onwards.

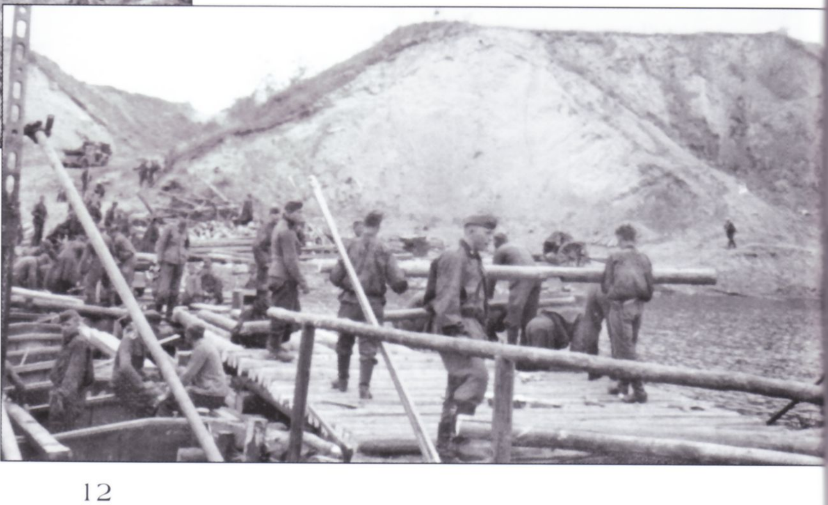
Vehicles belonging to an unidentified *Totenkopf* regiment have halted inside a French town. By the appearance of the faces of the troops they are in an ebullient mood, probably with news that the campaign in France is drawing to a victorious conclusion. According to the *Totenkopf* war diary, between 17 and 19 June 1940, the Division had taken some 6,088 prisoners at a cost of just five dead and 13 wounded.

Theodor Eicke was the creator of the Nazi concentration camp system and of the *Totenkopfverbände* who ran it. When the *Totenkopf*-Division was formed October 1939, he was a natural choice as its commander. Eicke was a brutal man, who hated the *Wehrmacht* and despised other Waffen-SS units. But despite his arrogant and contemptuous nature, he was a gifted commander idolised by his men. He was looked upon as a great organiser, and his determination infused *Totenkopf*s military training, creating an aggressive and hard-charging unit on the battlefield.



Totenkopf troops supported by a StuG.III Ausf.E assault gun move through the town of Opochka. In early July 1941, the SS *Totenkopf-Division* wa assigned to Manstein's 56.Panzer-Korps, part of H.Gr.Nord. The Division was given the task of guarding the Korps flank while maintaining contact with th 16.Armee to the south. On 5 July, *Totenkopf* spearheaded the Korps attack on the heavily fortified Stalin Line, along with the 56.Panzer-Korps. The SS me were surprised at the dense fortifications. Losses were high for the Soviets, who were determined not to lose the key town of Opochka.

SS soldiers pause during the initial phase of 'Barbarossa' Being Hitler's chosen spearhead troops, *Totenkopf* along wit their Waffen-SS counterparts, had immediate opportunities t distinguish themselves on the battlefield. With handpicke personnel, excellent training, effective leadership and first-clas armament, they were a mix of either fanatics or skillful an courageous soldiers. The first SS divisions – *Liebstandarte, Da Reich, Wiking* and *Totenkopf* fought with a reputation second-to none in the east.



Along the Dvina river *Totenkopf* engineers construct a makeshift wooden bridge during 'Barbarossa' in the summer of 1941. The men are wearing 'plain tree' pattern summer side out camouflage smocks with field grey trousers and SS pattern *Feldmütze.* The Division crossed the border with Russia on 24/25 June, cleared the Lithuanian forests around Jurbarkas and then moved towards the Dvina.

Totenkopf troops advance towards the Luga Line, the fortification system that stretched from the western tip of Lake Ilmen to the Gulf of Finland. This was the Soviet defence line before Leningrad, *Totenkopf* was detached from Manstein's Korps and added to the 16.Armee commanded by General Wiktorin. It was along the Luga Line in August 1941 that the Division experienced some of the hardest fighting during that year.

A *Totenkopf* soldier scours the terrain ahead through a pair of binoculars. In the distance smoke can be seen visibly pouring skyward following intensive Russian artillery bombardments along the Luga Line in August 1941. Strategically the Soviet position was stronger. However, *Totenkopf* were able to absorb wave after wave of Russian counterattacks and cautiously move forward probing enemy positions.

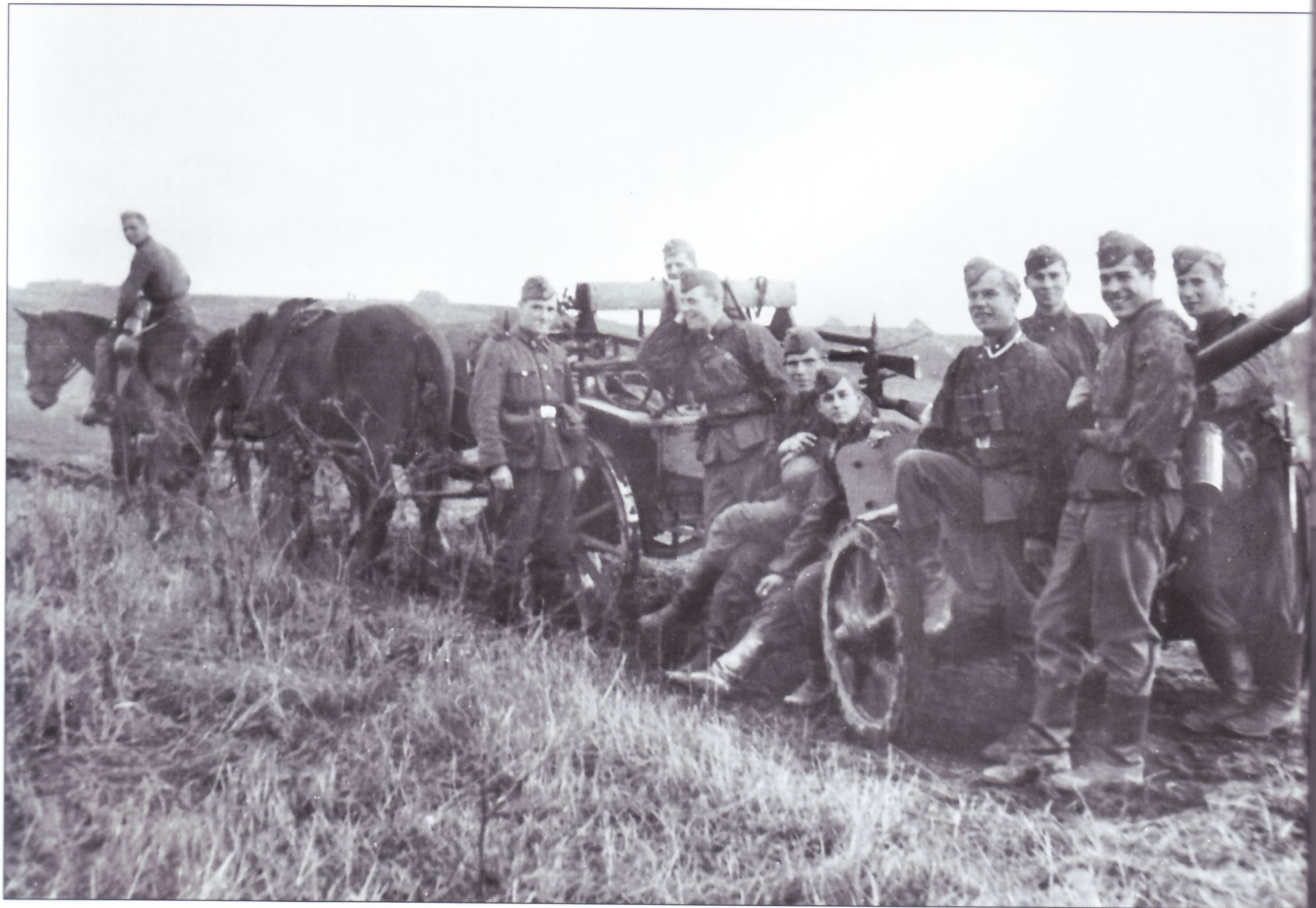
Field kitchens are an important part of any military organisation. Keeping troops fed well in the field enabled them to keep fighting effectively – hunger reduces combat efficiency remarkably quickly. This was particularly true in winter. SS field rations included rye bread, tinned meat or sausage, dried vegetable, jam or honey, coffee, sugar and cigarettes. This field kitchen is mounted on a railway truck during winter operations in 1941 on the Eastern Front.

Two *Totenkopf* riflemen are seen during anti-partisan actions in August 1941. This photograph was taken during the attacks along the Luga Line. During the initial Soviet assaults, partisan units constantly harassed *Totenkopfs'* lines of communications. However, *Totenkopf* infantry were soon able to establish a firm bridgehead across the Mshaga river in the face of suicidal Russian resistance.

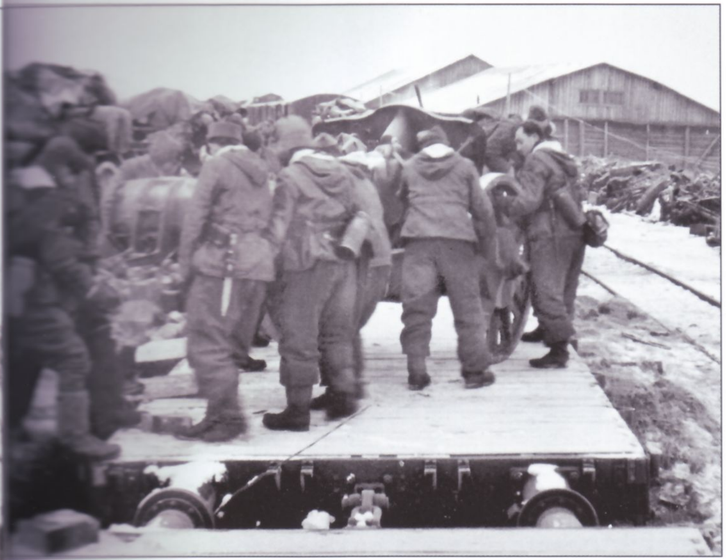
A group of *Totenkopf* soldiers take cover at the side of a dirt track during operations around Lushno in September 1941. The battle at Lushno reached its peak on 26 and 27 September, as *Totenkopf* endured a continuous 48-hour assault by everything the Red Army could spare. But the extraordinary resistance of *Totenkopf* showed a willingness to fight against appalling odds and this characterised the Division as a whole throughout the remainder of the war.

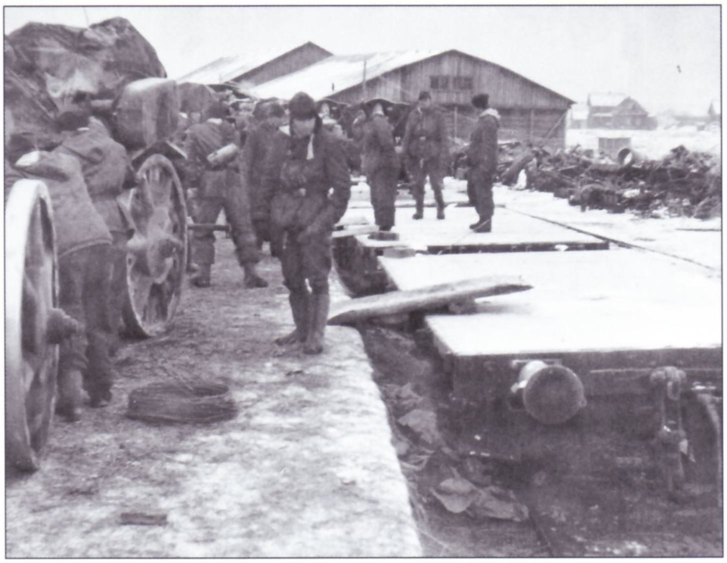
An SS-*Standartenführer* inspects a captured trench in the region around Lushno in October 1941. He is wearing the SS *Feldmütze*, to provide SS officers with a soft cap for field wear under conditions where the steel helmet was not required. The field cap could also be easily stowed away if the steel helmet was put on. *Standartenführer* and higher ranks did not display the SS runes on the collar worn by all other ranks. Instead both patches displayed the rank insignia, which consisted of one, two of three embroidered silver oak leaves together with white metal 'pips'.

Two *Totenkopf* riflemen inside a captured enemy trench in mid-January 1942. Thi photograph was taken when the Red Army were about to launch its massive offensiv against German forces south of Lake Ilmen, in an attempt to split H.Gr.Nord fro H.Gr.Mitte. In front of this planned drive lay 16.Armee, 10.Korps and 2.Korps, part which was the *Totenkopf*-Division. The two riflemen are wearing furs beneath their whit winter camouflage smocks. The soldier is using an ammunition box to rest his 98k bol action rifle on.

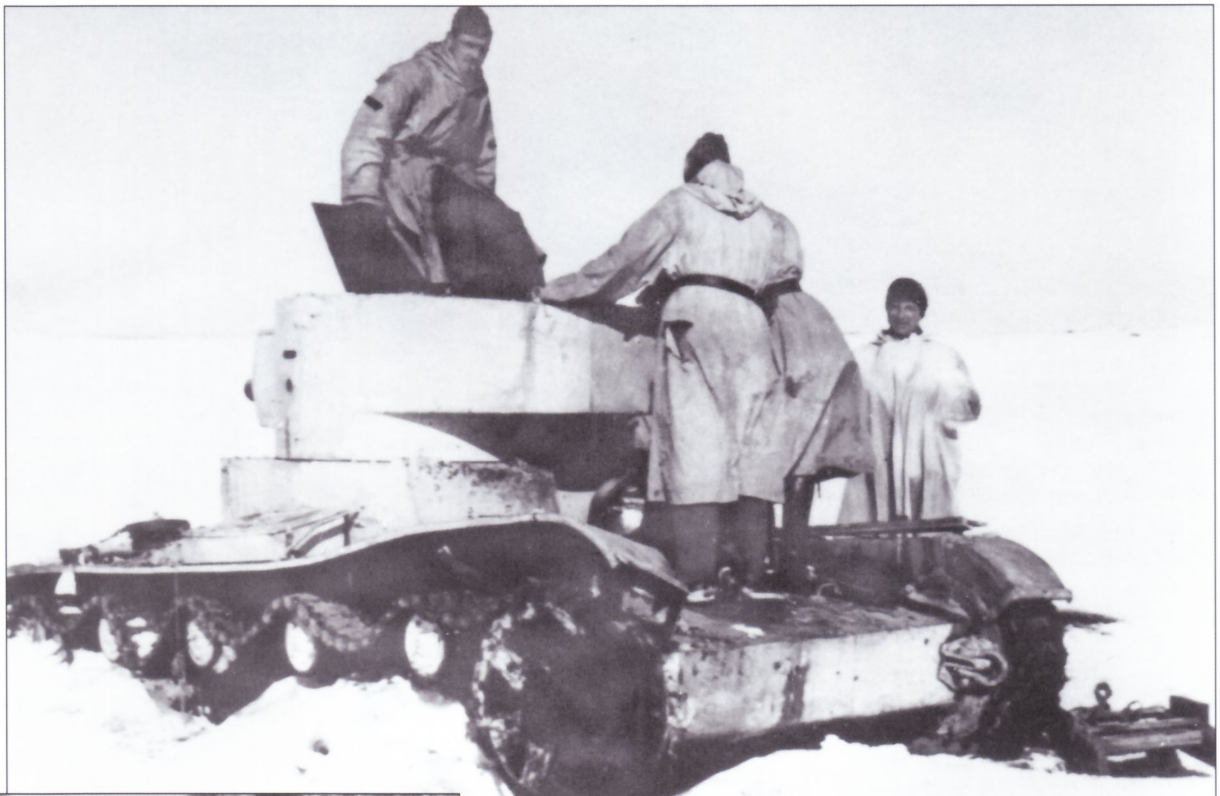


A group of *Totenkopf* soldiers pose with a 5cm Pak38 antitank gun. The troops are all wearing the standard SS *Feldmütze*, and a number of them ar equipped with M1940 camouflage smocks with its spring/summer side design exposed. These camouflaged garments had a lace-up front opening down the waist, loosely cut bellow sleeves and two vertical openings at the chest with covering flaps. The waist and wrists were elasticated for a much closer f Two large openings each side of the smock were intended to allow the soldier to access his ammunition.

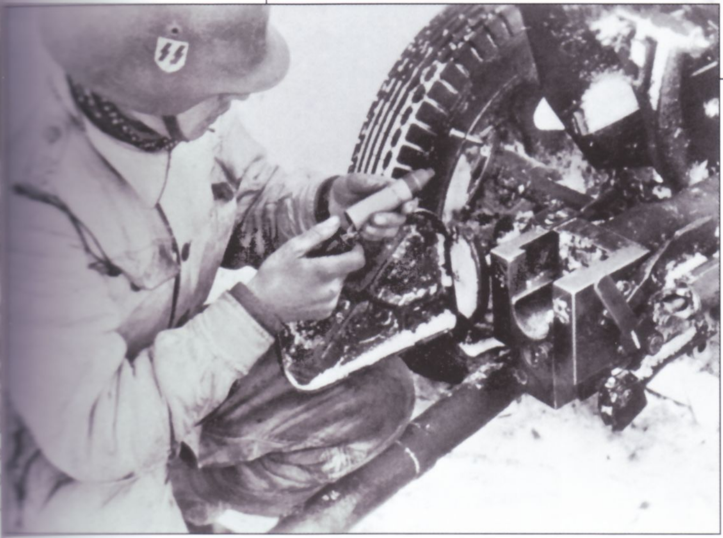




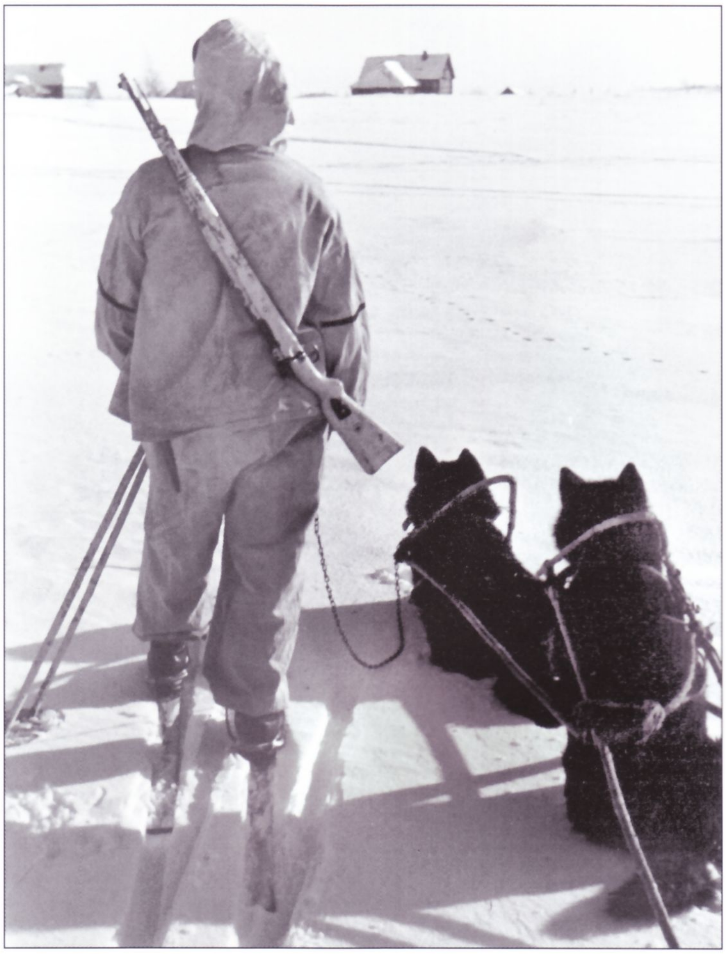
Two photographs taken within minutes of each other showing *Totenkopf* troops unloading a 10.5cm leFH18 field artillery piece from a flat-bed railroad car sometime in mid-January 1942. Five battalions from *Totenkopf*, including part of the artillery regiment, were hurried north on 9 January to help stiffen the areas of the front south of Lake Ilmen that were soon threatened to collapse. Note the soldiers wearing reversible padded winter uniforms.



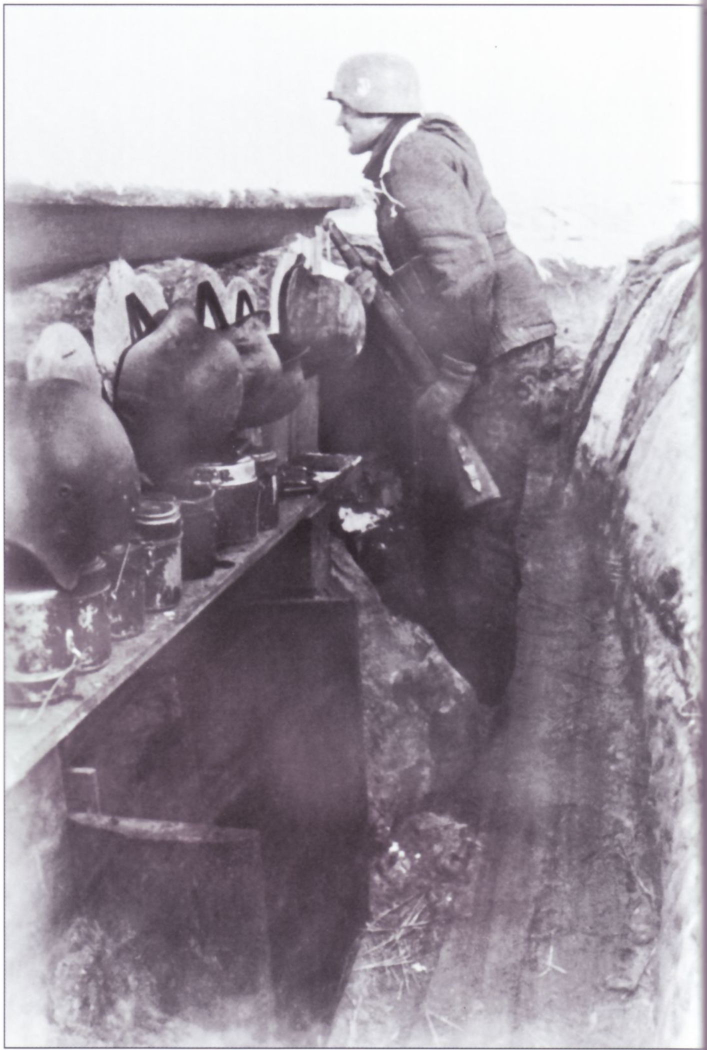
Totenkopf soldiers examine a knocked-out Russian T-26 light tank in January 1942. Based on a British Vickers design of the 1920's, this was the most common tank in the Soviet inventory at the outbreak of the war. However, thousands were destroyed during 'Operation Barbarossa' in the summer of 1941. Designed to provide close support to the infantry, each Soviet motor rifle division had one company of these vehicles.



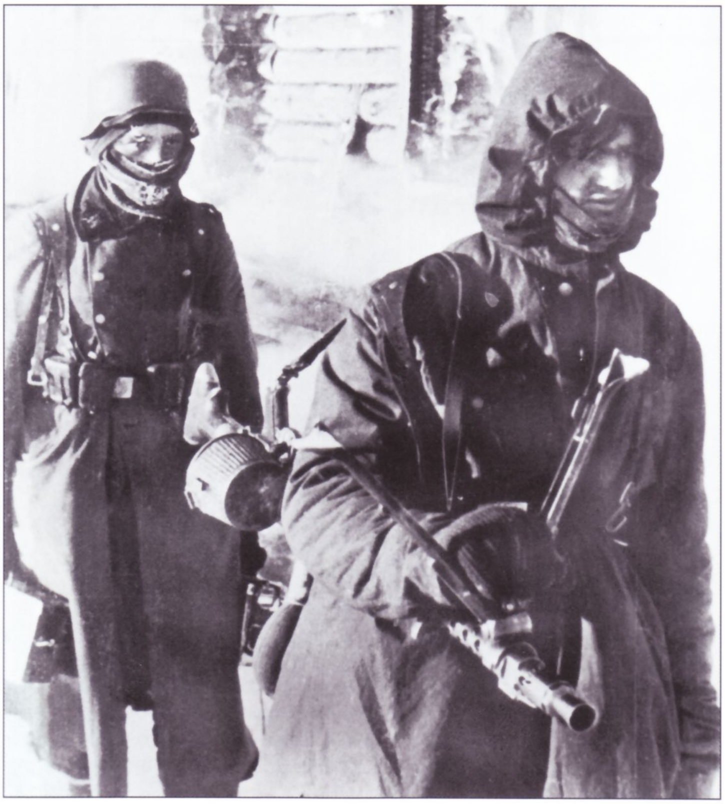
Here a *Totenkopf* gunner is about to load a cartridge into his 3.7cm Pak36 antitank gun during operations in the Demyansk Pocket in early 1942. As on all fronts in the Soviet Union the *Totenkopf* found that the Pak36 proved utterly useless against the T-34 tank, and earned the nickname the 'Doorknocker'.

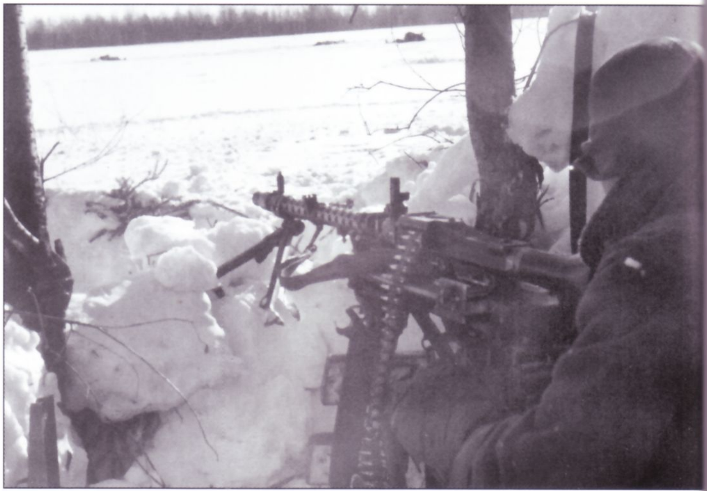


A *Totenkopf* soldier on skis halts his dogsled in the snow during a lull in the fighting in January 1942. Ski troops were a very effective means of movement across frozen terrain, and used extensively by reconnaissance patrols. The soldier is wearing the shapeless two-piece snowsuit consisting of a white jacket and white trousers. With Red Army forces wearing similar winter clothing, front line German troops were issued with colored armbands enabling them to distinguish between friend and foe. Note his Kar 98k bolt-action rifle has also received a winter coat of whitewash.



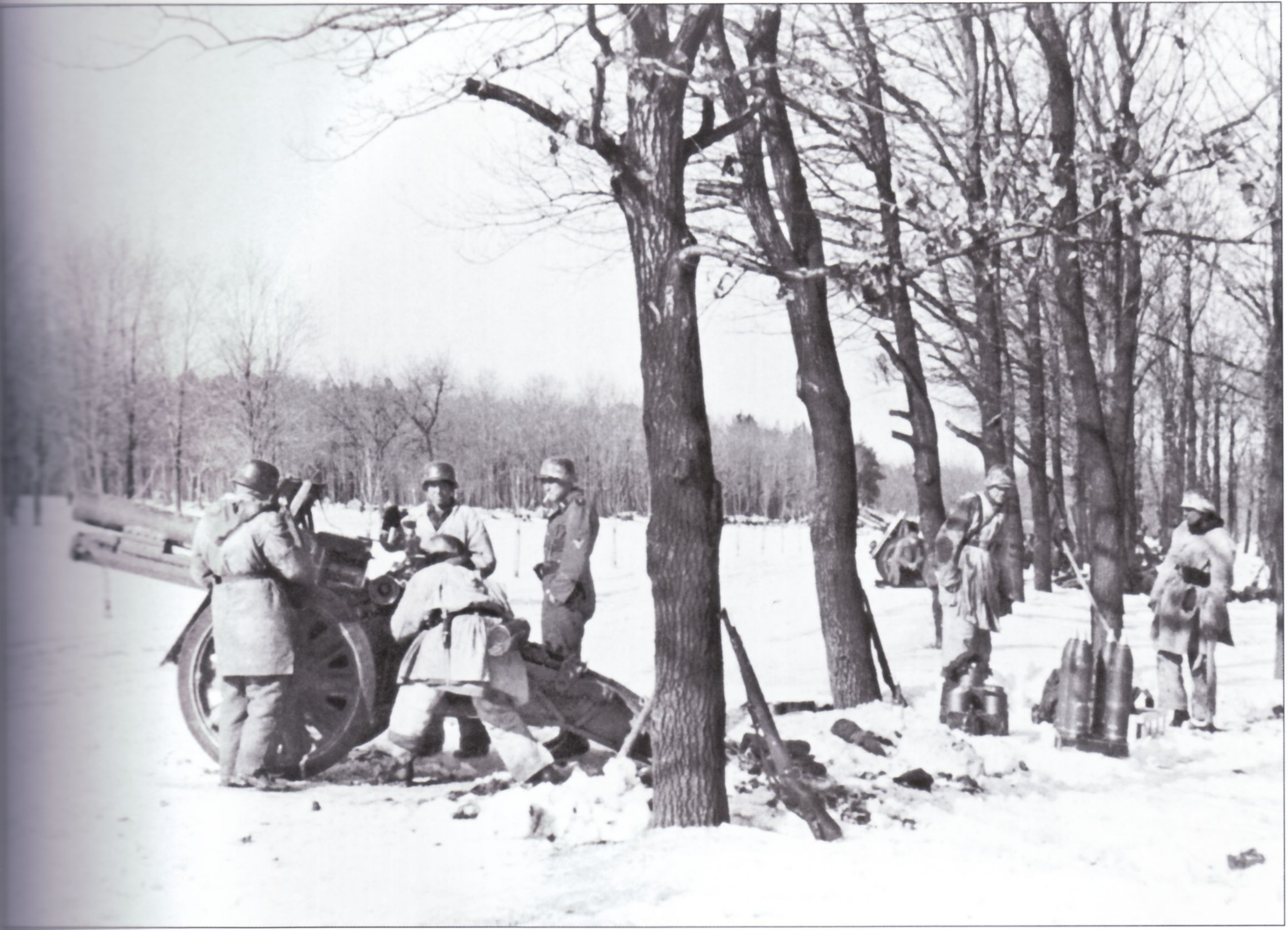
A soldier peers across the vast Russian landscape whilst taki protective cover in a slit trench. Note the equipment; particularly ste helmets, which are hanging on wooden logs supporting the roof of the improvised bunker.





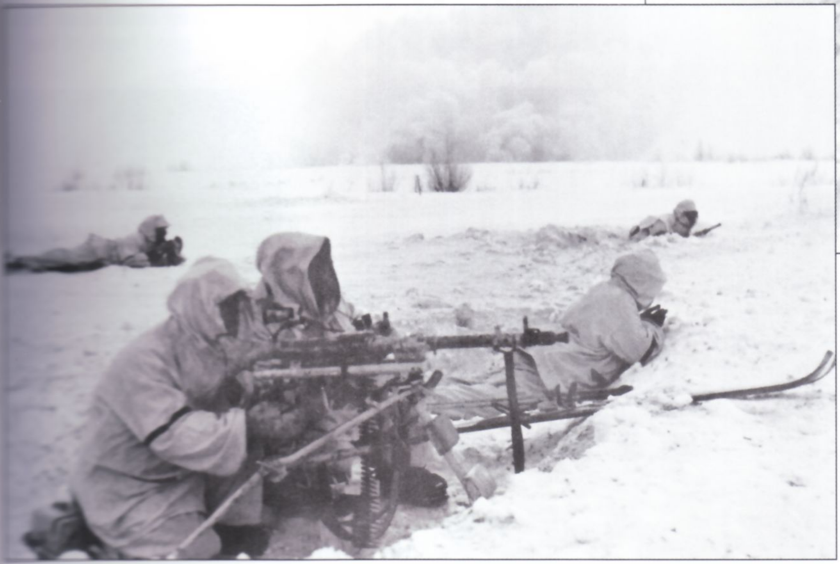
A *Totenkopf* MG34 gunner somewhere inside the Demyansk Pocket February 1942. As the Soviets closed the ring around Demyansk, *Totenko* troops trapped inside were split into two *Kampfgruppen*, which include army personnel. Theodor Eicke, who was ordered to defend the southwe sector of the pocket, commanded the first *Kampfgruppe*. On the northwe edge of the pocket, SS *Oberführer* Max Simon commanded the secon *Kampfgruppe*.

An MG34 machine gun squad during winter operations in 1942. Bo the men are dressed in reversible clothing gray side, and appear to be we protected against the harsh winter conditions. The MG34 machine gun he carrying is fitted with a drum magazine.

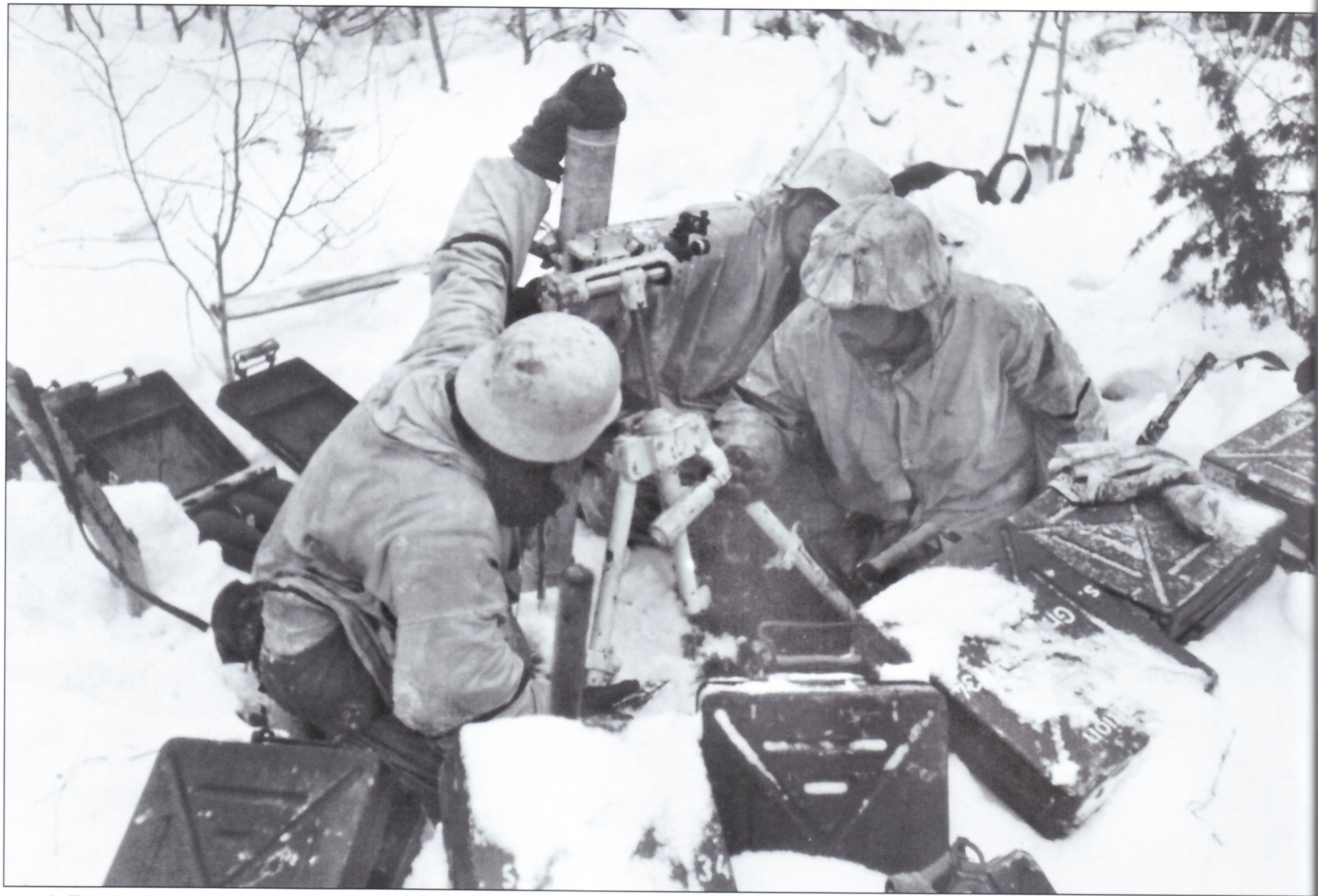


A 15cm sIG33, the standard heavy infantry howitzer of the German Army, here being used by a *Totenkopf* gun crew in the snow in 1942. This field howitzer was issued to *Totenkopf`s* artillery regiment's light battalions in preparation of the campaign against Russia. However, as the war progressed, the gun was placed on the Pz.Kpfw.38(t) chassis (Grille) and served as the mobile artillery in the *Totenkopf`s* Panzer-Grenadier Regiments.

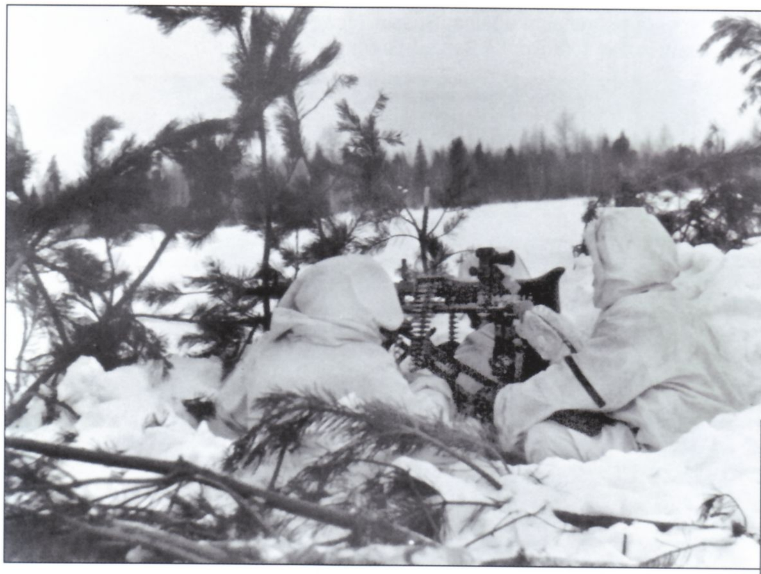
A long column of *Totenkopf* troops hauling their supplies through the snow using horse and sled. This picture was taken during a lull in the months of fighting in the Demyansk Pocket. Movement was very risky during daylight hours, as Red Army aircraft regularly attacked German formations out in the open.



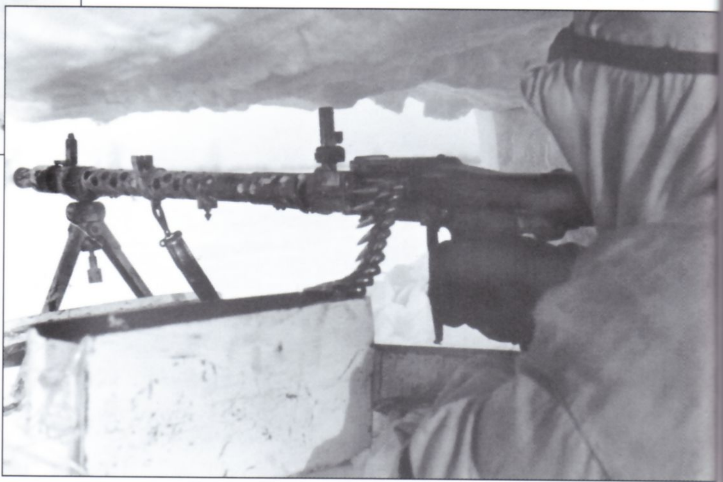
Totenkopf soldiers in action in the Demyansk Pocket in February 1942. An MG34 machine gun has been set up on a sustained fire mount and the gunner and feeder can be seen poised to use this potent weapon in anger. Hitler's order to stand and fight to the death was the kind of instruction that these hard-bitten soldiers of the Waffen-SS understood the best. Unlike their *Wehrmacht* counterparts, *Totenkopf* were well suited to winter warfare, having been provided with ample supplies of winter clothing.



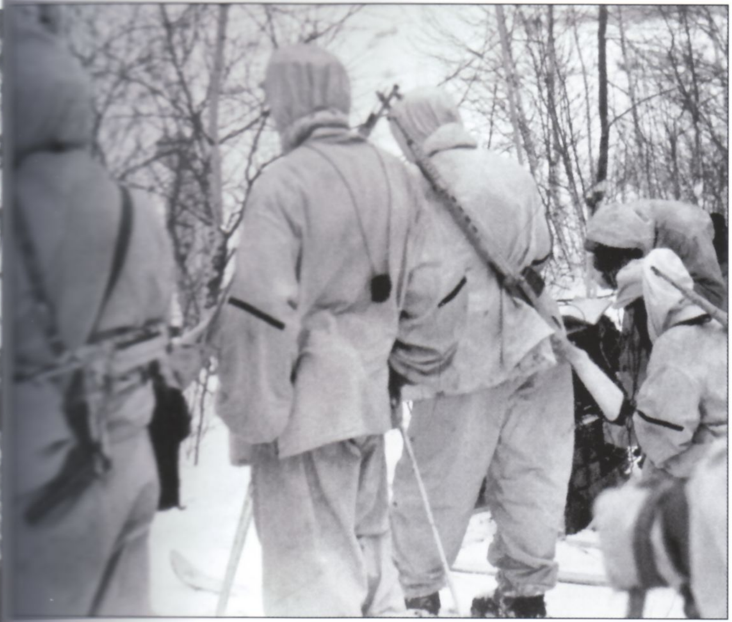
A *Totenkopf* mortar crew about to fire a shell during a defensive combat in the Demyansk Pocket. Note the number of discarded ammunition boxes indicating the degree of fighting raging in the area. Also of interest, note that two of the soldiers have received an application of whitewash paint to thei M1935 steel helmets, whilst one of the mortar crew wears a white canvas helmet cover as an alternative form of winter camouflage.



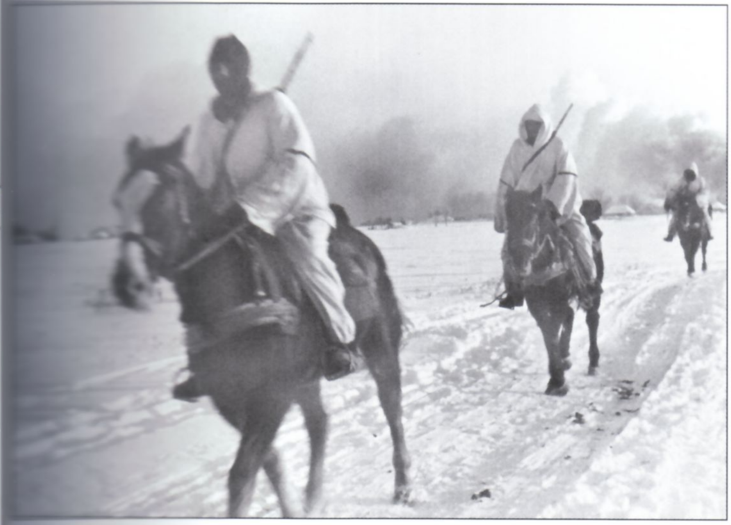
A *Totenkopf* MG34 machine gun crew in a defensiv position on the edge of the Demyansk Pocket. The machine gu has been attached to a MG Lafette 34 sustained-fire mount. The gunner uses a grip trigger that has a mechanical linkage to the trigger on the gun. The MG34 had tremendous staying power o the battlefield, as long as the machine gun crew could keep thei weapon fully operational and deployed with good fields of fire.

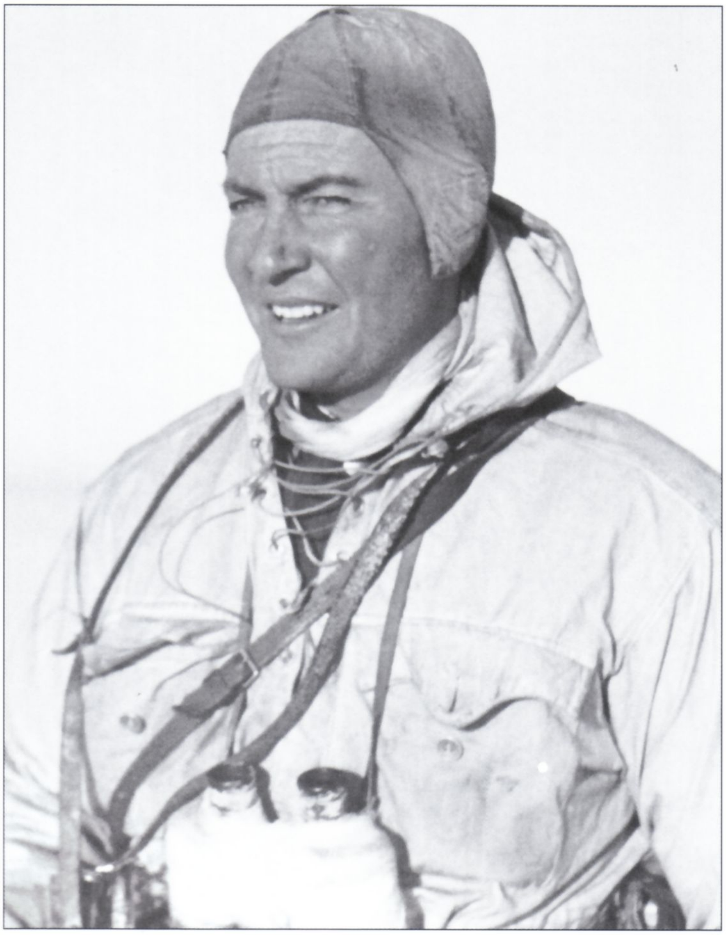


Several Waffen-SS and *Wehrmacht* units built igloos to shelter from the arctic winds, and to use as machine gun nests. In this photograph an MG34 gunner can be seen preparing to fire his weapon. Note the ammunition box with a 50-round belt of bullets. Each box could hold up to six 50-round belts laid in staggered rows.



A group of ski troopers in February 1942. The soldiers are armed with a mix of weapons, including Kar 98k bolt-action rifles, MP40 sub-machine guns and a captured Tokarev. Sub-machine guns were used extensively by SS ski troops and by their Soviet counterparts. They offered less of a burden than rifles while skiing, and they could be brought into action much more quickly.

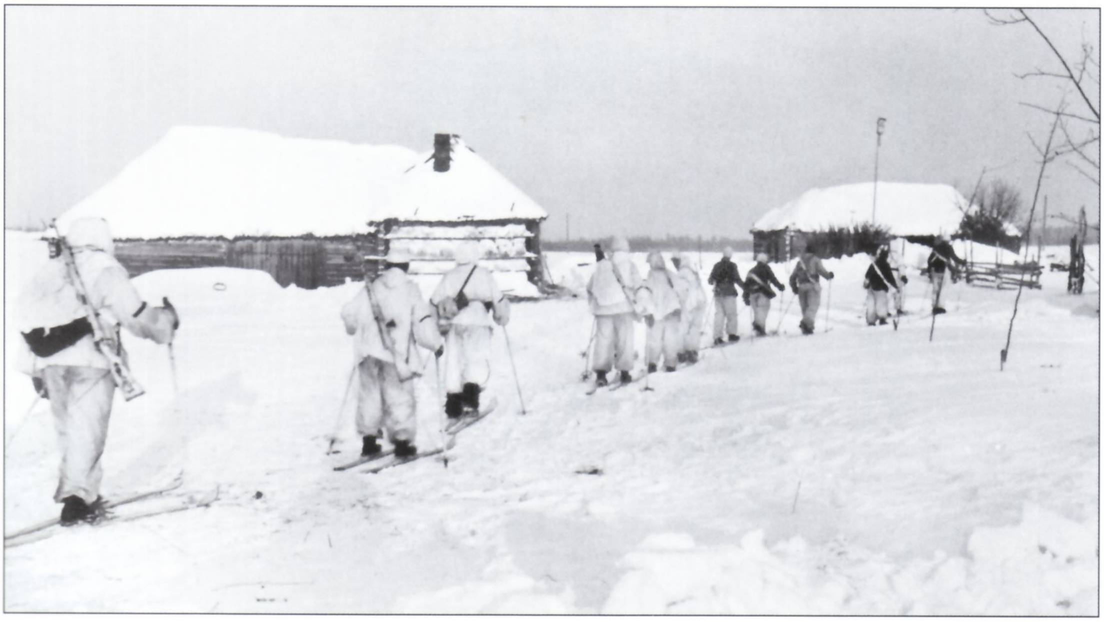


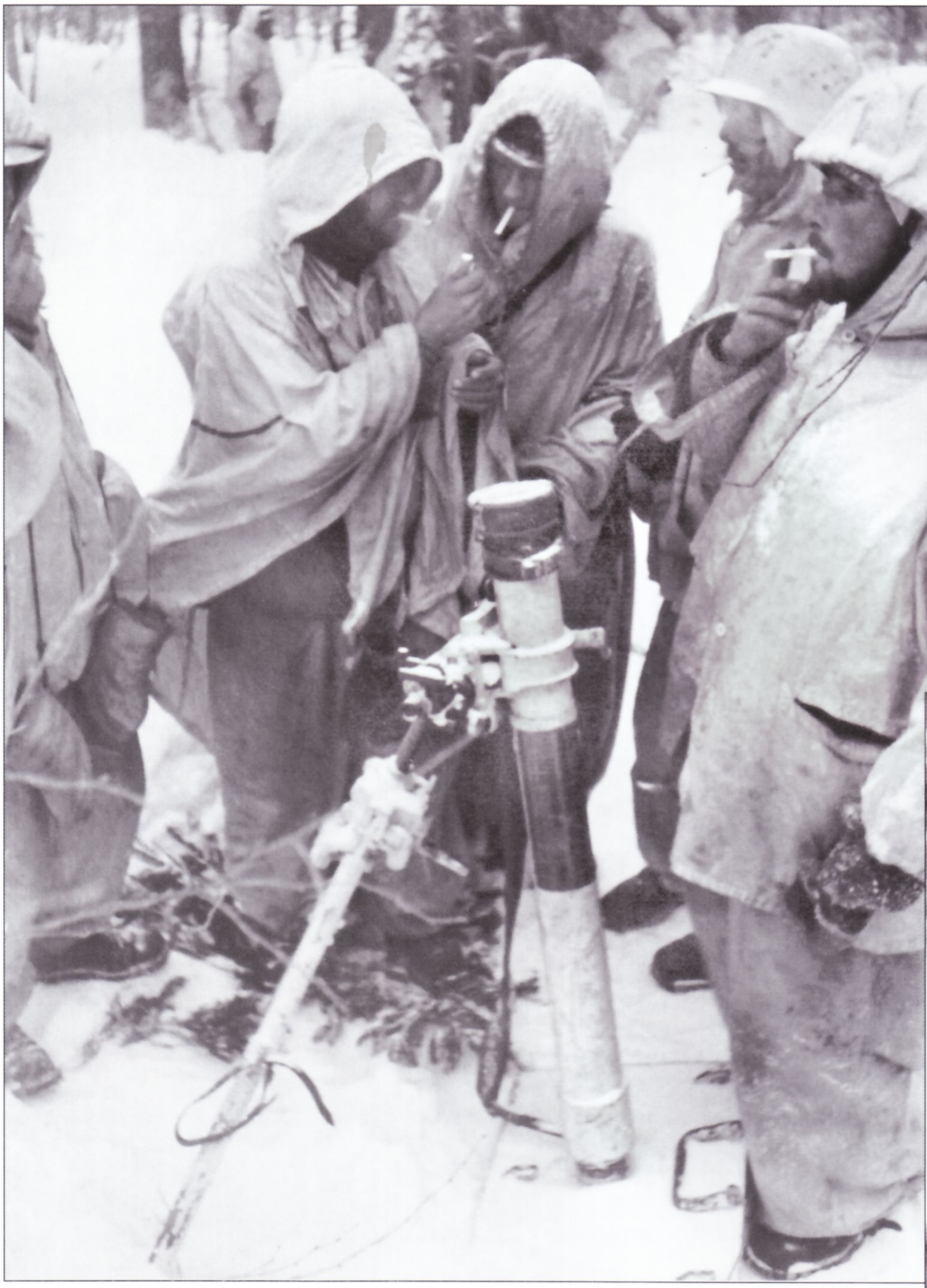


A *Totenkopf* soldier seen during operations inside the Demyansk Pocket in February 1942. This SS man has been kitted out with ample winter clothing. Note the headpiece worn by this particular soldier. It was designed to help contain as much body heat as possible and to prevent discomfort from the arctic temperatures whilst wearing the standard issue steel helmet. Troops often complained that the helmets were like 'freezer boxes' during the winter. Heat loss through the head lowered their body temperatures. This led to a very real danger of exposure as well as hypothermia.

Totenkopf troops belonging to Eicke's *Kampfgruppe* patrol the edge of the Demyansk Pocket on horseback. A village in the background can be seen coming under heavy attack. This was a desperate battle of attrition, but Eicke firmly believed that his men were superior and that their resistance would wear down the Soviet onslaught. His men did indeed fight with skill and endurance, but he drove them to the ends of that endurance.

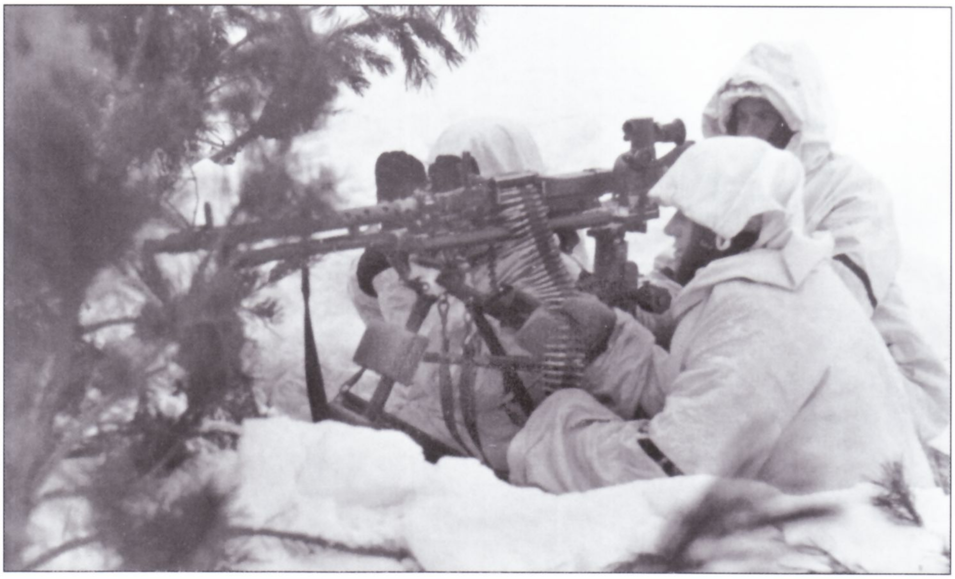
Totenkopf soldiers on their way to the front lines in the Demyansk Pocket. The Red Army could field some 15 fresh infantry divisions against the exhausted German forces. With the pocket becoming increasingly constricted, the *Luftwaffe* successfully began supplying the beleaguered troops by air. Some supplies were flown in directly to an improvised airfield in the pocket, from where sick and wounded could be evacuated, while others were dropped by parachute.



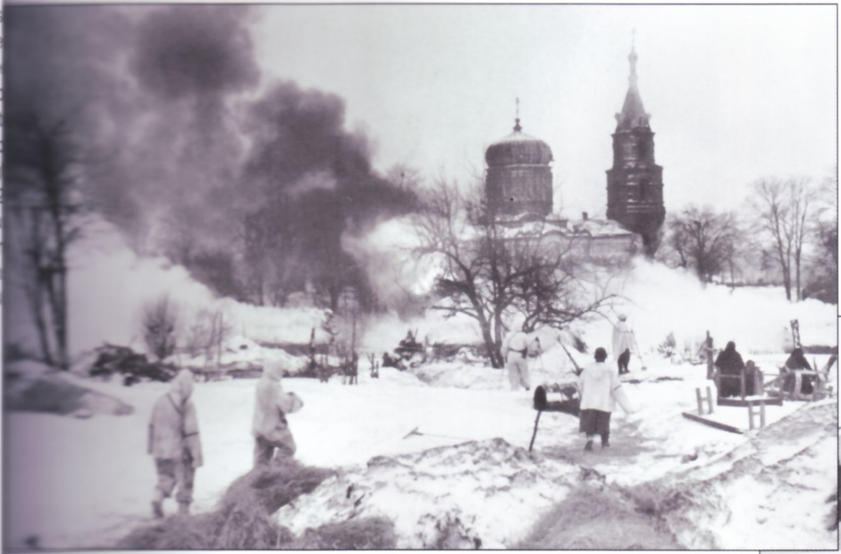


During a lull in the Demyans fighting, a *Totenkopf* mortar crew tak time out to have a much-neede cigarette. They are all wearing the tw piece snowsuit and their steel helme have received an application whitewash for camouflage. Throug February and early March 194 *Totenkopf* was under continuo pressure, yet in most sectors of the fro they did not retreat from their positio in temperatures that averaged 3 degrees centigrade below zero.

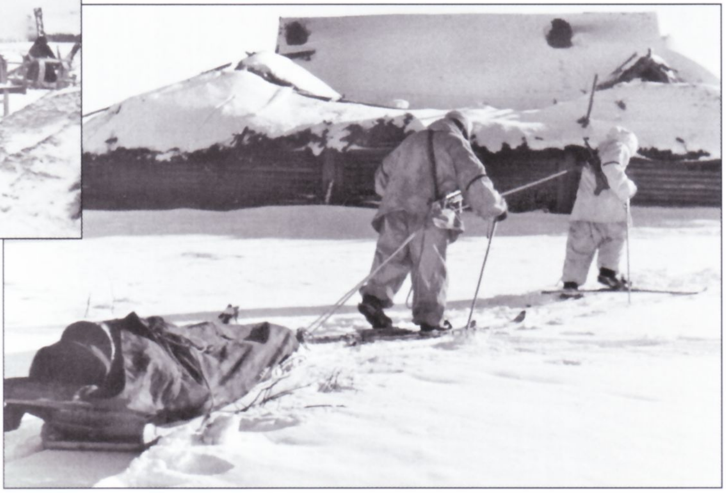
A well wrapped up *Totenkopf* soldier in a whi camouflage smock. The Waffen-SS, along with the *Wehrmacht* counterparts, made many gre sacrifices during the winter of 1941-42. Those th managed to survive the ordeal got a medal to pro they had been there. Troops nicknamed th decoration the 'Frozen Meat Medal', as many them had experienced uncovering the froze corpses of their dead comrades and giving the proper burials.



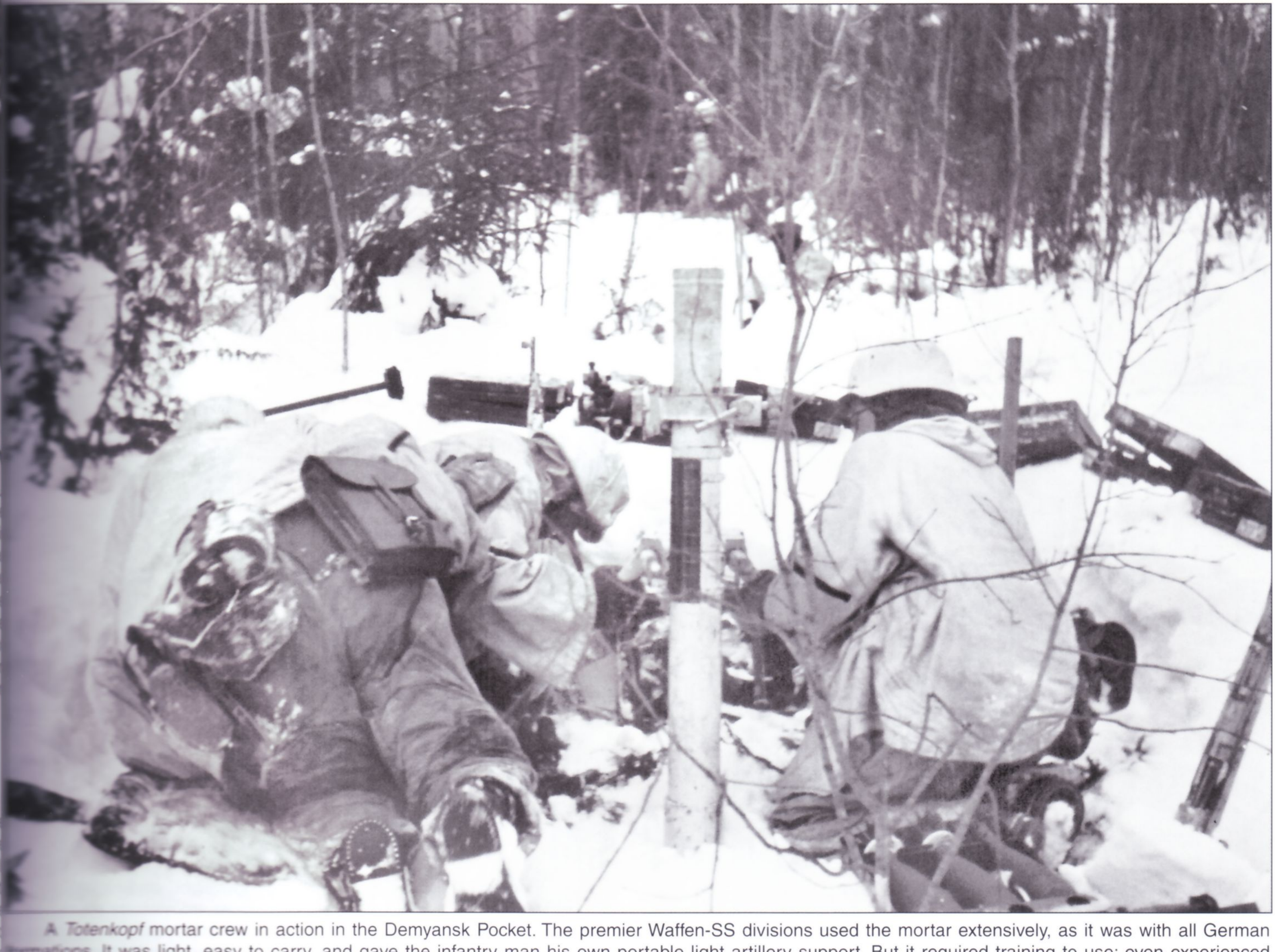
An MG34 machine gun position. The machi gun is mounted on the MG Lafette 34 sustained-fi mount. The MG34 machine gun crew are a camouflaged in the standard two-piece snowsu The snowsuits jacket is buttoned right down th front with white painted buttons and has attache white hood. The white trousers were worn over th winter clothing and were tucked into the boots.



Totenkopf troops are driven from buildings as the Red Army deliberately destroy every shelter and safe haven in the Demyansk Pocket. Life in the line for these men was a continuous grind of guard duty and patrols. There was little respite – if the Soviets ever let up for a brief period, the sub zero temperatures certainly did not. Numb and cold, in spite of their winter clothing, they would stumble back into shelters – primitive dugouts, whose air was thick with choking smoke. By March 1942, most of the men were infested with lice, and to make matters worse they could not undress in the cold dugout to pick off and kill the vermin.



A *Totenkopf* soldier with the aid of a sled transports one of the many casualties to a hastily erected field hospital. During the winter of 1941-42, *Totenkopf* along with the rest of the Waffen-SS divisions on the Eastern Front had suffered massive casualties. Out of the 100,000 strong employed in Russia, there were over 8,000 dead and 28,000 wounded.



A *Totenkopf* mortar crew in action in the Demyansk Pocket. The premier Waffen-SS divisions used the mortar extensively, as it was with all German formations. It was light, easy to carry, and gave the infantry man his own portable light artillery support. But it required training to use; even experienced mortar crews could take several rounds to achieve just one successful hit on target.

Totenkopf troops compelled to protect themselves against the bitter night ahead and dig a large fox hole in the snow. Even by the early winter of 1942, *Totenkopf* were still learning how to deal with some of the problems of winter warfare. However, *Totenkopf* had already set up excellent liaison networks through the depots of units under their command to help endure the winter, but the Division still lacked shelter on the front lines.

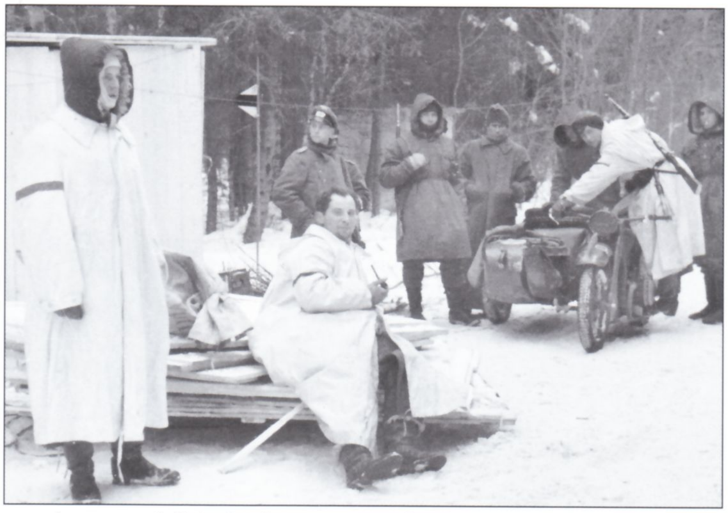
Totenkopf troops protect themselves against the bitter night ahead with one single quilted blanket. Over the months that the Division fought in the Demyansk Pocket, they had to contend with continual Soviet attacks designed to deny them any shelter. Although casualties were high; the majority of those killed did not in fact perish due to the cold.

In the snow *Totenkopf* soldiers wade across a field dressed in their tw
piece camouflage suits. This photograph was taken west of the Lovat river
the most hard-pressed areas of the Demyansk Pocket. The two *Totenk*
Kampfgruppen were used as 'fire brigade' units, plugging gaps wherev
they appeared in the front.

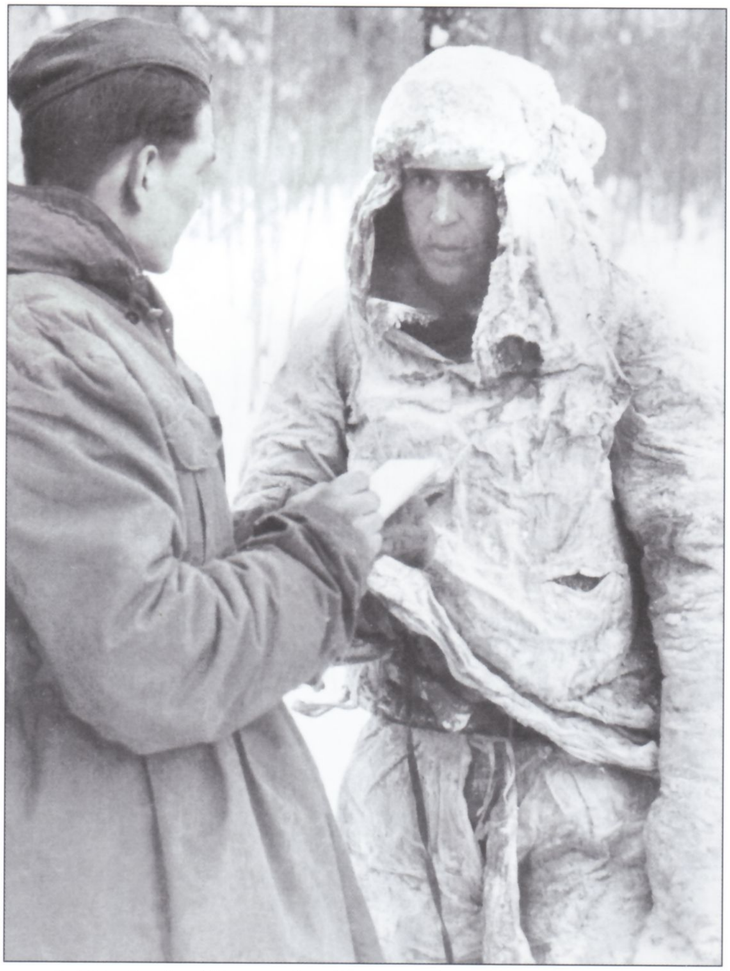
A *Totenkopf* radio operator uses his lightweight, sled-mounted rad
set. He is probably at a forward observation post, from where he can se
details of enemy movements back to divisional headquarters. For ease
use he is wearing black knitted mittens, instead of the standard white mitte
supplied to all ski-troopers.

A *Totenkopf* signals operator receives orders through his earphones and jots down the messages on his notepad. He is wearing the black field cap, which bears the usual 'eagle' and 'death's head'.

Dressed in their winter white camouflage smocks, *Totenkopf* troops trudge along a frozen road, passing dead Soviet soldiers lying in the snow. The Red Army was basically an infantry force with a primitive supply and administration service, manned by soldiers of immense toughness and physical strength. They were accustomed since birth to far colder temperatures, which they withstood on far smaller rations than many in the West would have believed possible. Faced with such a foe, the SS soldier had to adapt very quickly, or die.



A group of *Totenkopf* troops pose for the camera. Behind the two soldiers in the foreground is a motorcyclist with his motorcycle combination. Of interest three of the soldiers are wearing their reversible gray/white suits, gray-side. This is more than likely due to the fact that they were fighting in dense forested areas with little trace of snow.



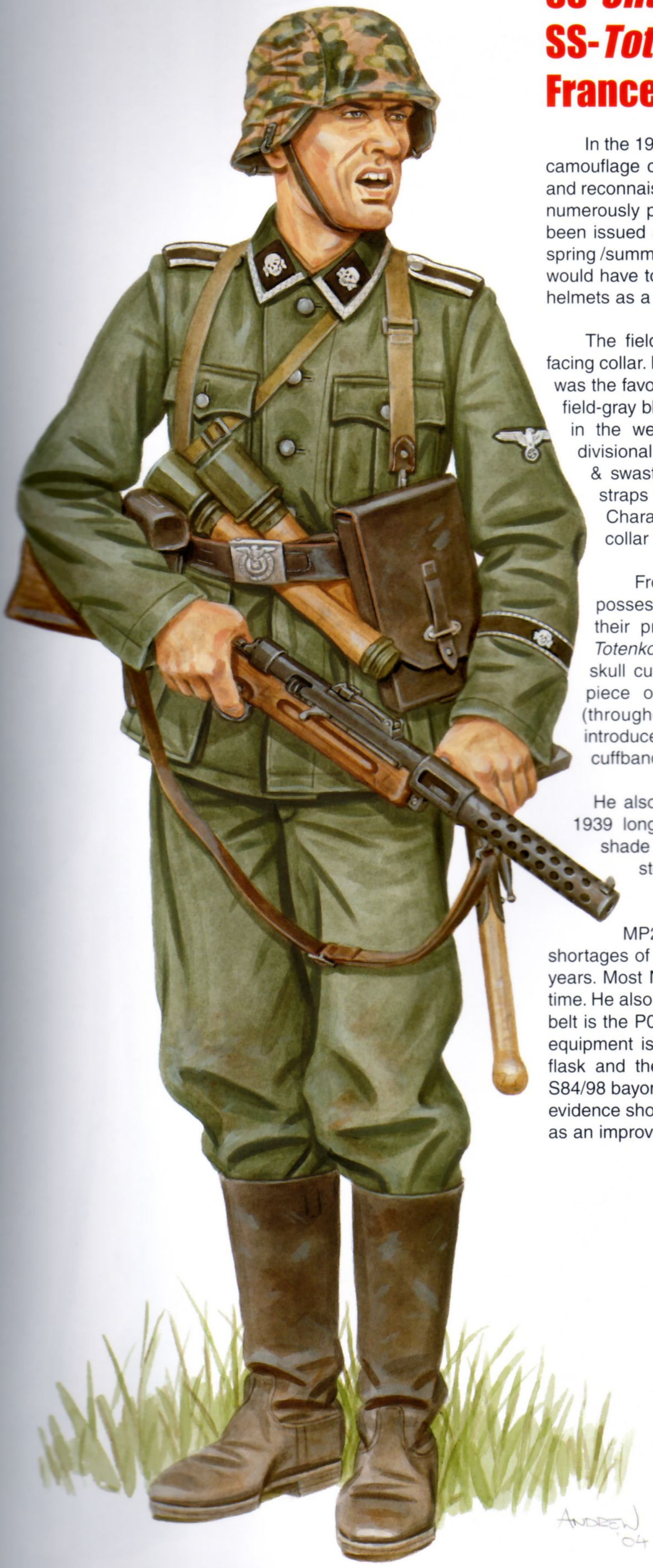
A *Totenkopf* soldier wearing his reversible gray/white suit, gray-side, confers with a comrade with the aid of a notepad and pencil. His comrade is wearing the shapeless two-piece snowsuit. Although the snowsuit was a popular item of winter clothing soldiers tended to wear it day and night for weeks on end. Soon it became filthy, thus defeating the object of the white camouflage.

A *Totenkopf* soldier makes the most of the natural environment by constructing a makeshift shelter in a forest. He is wearing his reversible winter unifo gray-side in order to camouflage himself with the dense overgrowth of the forest. He is also wearing the helmet toque, which was a shapeless sleeve of fie gray woollen material open at both ends. It could be worn, as in this photograph, around the base of the wearer's neck and the other end around the fac

Totenkopf troops in full winter kit prepare to move forward. Note all the soldiers are wearing rolled ground sheets that are probably from captured Soviet stocks. Living in the snow was generally very difficult, but all the soldiers were taught that the snow could also serve as an ally, and was not simply an enemy to be feared.

A *Totenkopf* MG34 machine gun team are seen wearing single-pie snow overalls. These items of winter clothing were probably the m popular forms of snow camouflage produced by the Germans. The over was a single white cotton garment that had an attached hood and lo sleeves. Being loose fitting, it could be easily worn over the uniform a equipment. Whilst the garment afforded complete snow camouflage a excellent freedom of movement to the wearer, it did have one ma drawback in that the cotton material quickly got filthy.

SS-*Unterscharführer*, SS-*Totenkopf*-Pioneer Battalion, France 1940



In the 1940 campaign not all Waffen-SS divisional units were issued camouflage clothing due to limited stocks. Priority went to the infantry and reconnaissance units. Smocks were in short supply compared to the numerously produced helmet cover and shelter-quarter. This NCO has been issued an SS camouflage helmet cover (showing the 'Plain Tree' spring /summer side) for his SS M35 steel helmet. Many of his comrades would have to make do without helmet covers and smear mud on their helmets as a temporary camouflage measure.

The field blouse worn is the Army M36 type with a dark-green facing collar. By 1940 this more practical and smarter looking army tunic was the favored choice for the Waffen-SS. The now redundant SS M36 field-gray blouse was being phased out although many were still used in the western campaign. The insignia on the tunic is the first divisional type double *Totenkopf* vertical collar patches, the SS eagle & swastika national emblem on the left arm and black shoulder straps of the SS with black piping branch color (*waffenfarbe*). Characteristic of this NCO is bright aluminum 'tresse' trim on his collar and shoulder straps.

From 1939 to mid 1942 the *Totenkopf*-Division did not possess a cuffband, however some soldiers of this division wore their pre-war regimental cuffbands. As a member of the SS-*Totenkopf Standarte 'Oberbayern'* he wears this unit's regimental skull cuffband. The *'Oberbayen'* cuffband was a highly desirable piece of insignia sought after by personnel in the Division (throughout the war). A divisional *Totenkopf* cuffband was introduced on 1st September 1942, nevertheless the *'Oberbayern'* cuffband although unofficial was tolerated.

He also wears the SS field-gray service trouser tucked into pre-1939 long shaft marching boots. These trousers were the same shade of field-gray as the army tunic, army trousers in 1940 were stone gray in color.

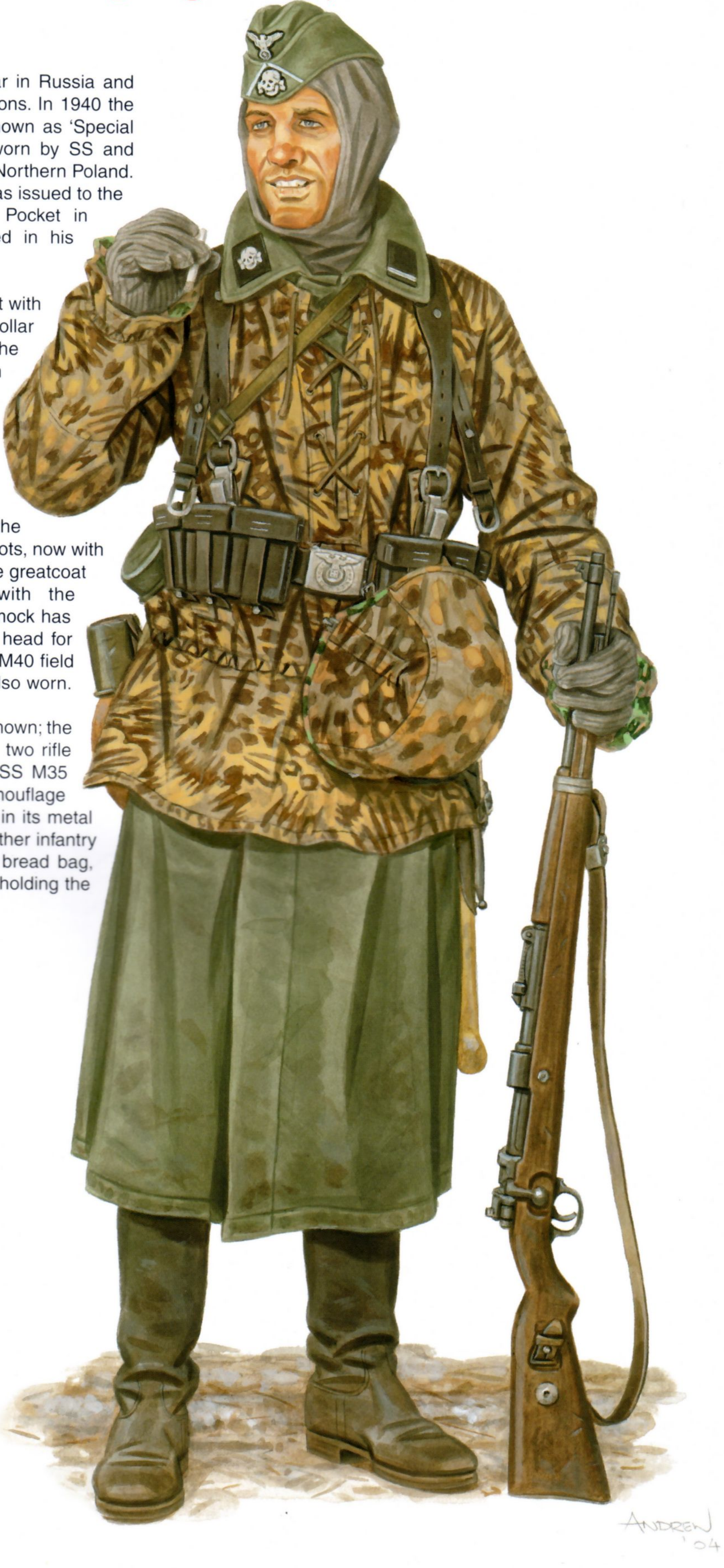
This senior-corporal has acquired a 'Bergmann' MP28/II. These were mostly taken from captured stock due to shortages of sub-machine guns in the *Wehrmacht* during the early war years. Most NCOs were still issued with the Karabiner 98k rifle at this time. He also carries two M24 stick grenades. Attached to his SS leather belt is the P08 pistol holster and MP28 leather magazine pouch. Other equipment issued (out of view) is the M1931 bread bag, M1931 field flask and the SS shelter quarter (*Zeltbahn*), small entrenching tool, S84/98 bayonet and M1938 gasmask in its metal canister. Photographic evidence shows some 'SS-TK' soldiers wearing the M31 breadbag strap as an improvised equipment support strap.

SS-*Sturmann*, SS-*Totenkopf* (Motorized) Infantry Regiment 1, Russia, December 1941

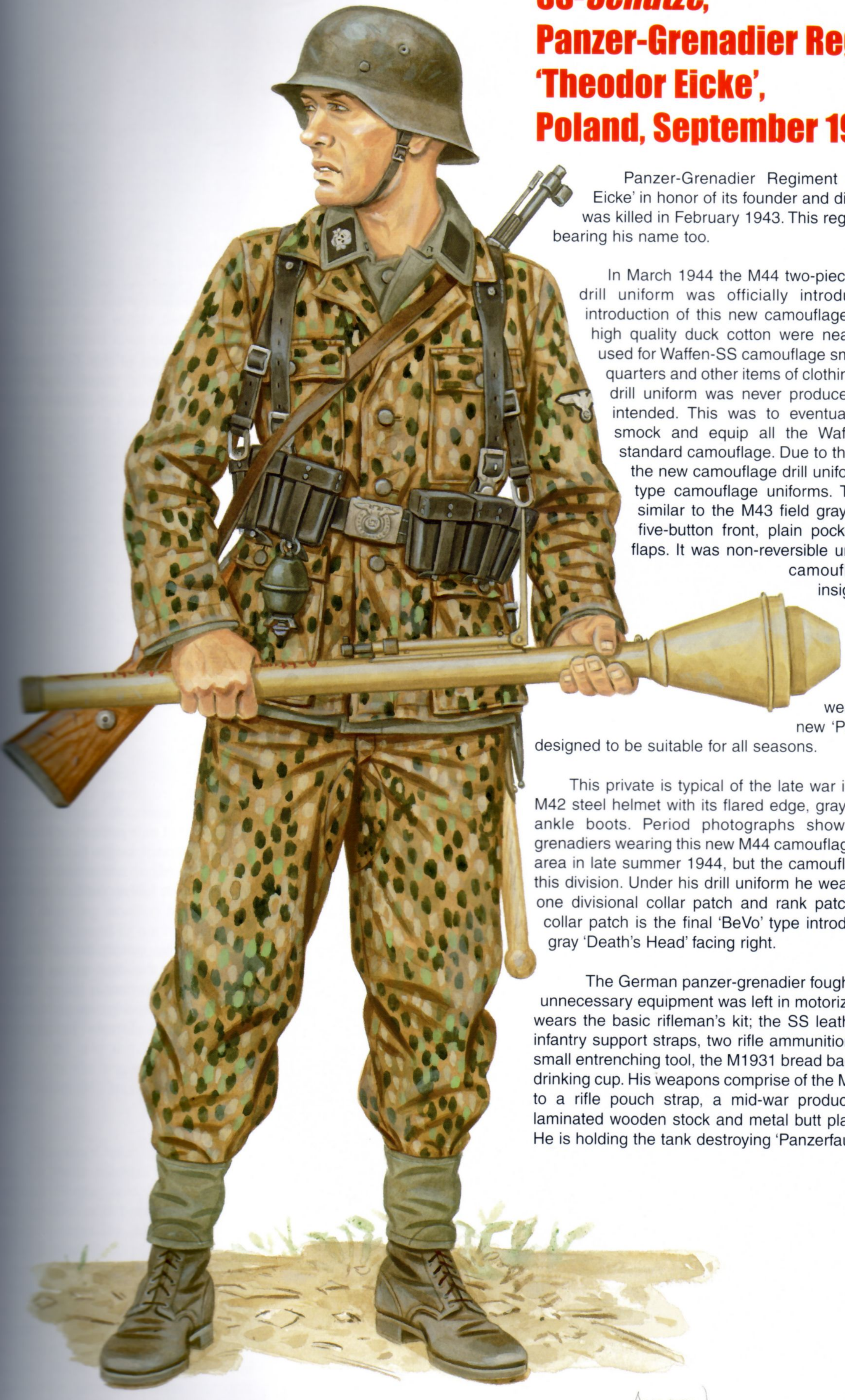
The *Wehrmacht* was unprepared for a winter war in Russia and inadequately clothed to fight in harsh sub-zero conditions. In 1940 the foresighted SS tested new winter clothing officially known as 'Special Clothing for Particularly Cold Zones'. It was to be worn by SS and 'Death's Head' units in occupation duty in Norway and Northern Poland. In mid-January 1942 special fur-lined winter clothing was issued to the *Totenkopf* division during the battle of Demyansk Pocket in northern Russia. This SS lance corporal is dressed in his standard issue winter clothing uniform.

His winter uniform consists of the M1940 greatcoat with its field gray collar and relevant *Totenkopf* insignia collar patches. The collar patches in this case follow the conventional Waffen-SS style with one divisional patch & rank patch. However many divisional personnel continued to wear the double 'Death's Head' collar patch insignia. The SS practice of wearing collar patches on the greatcoat was abolished in 1942 to conserve collar patch stocks. Other insignia on the greatcoat included the SS national emblem on the left arm. Under his greatcoat he would be wearing the standard *Totenkopf* service uniform & M39 marching boots, now with their shorter shaft to preserve leather supplies. Over the greatcoat he wears the reversible M1940 type smock with the autumn/winter side worn outermost. In this case the smock has the distinctive 'Palm Tree' camouflage pattern. On his head for extra warmth he wears the woolen toque under an SS M40 field cap (introduced in October 1940). Woolen gloves are also worn.

Standard rifleman's equipment and weapons are shown; the M1939 infantry support straps, SS enlisted mans belt, two rifle ammunition pouches (slung over one of them is the SS M35 steel helmet with the autumn/winter 'Plain Tree' camouflage helmet cover), M1931 field flask, the M1938 gasmask in its metal canister, small entrenching tool and S84/98 bayonet. Other infantry equipment items worn (but not seen) are the M1931 bread bag, mess kit M31 and SS shelter quarter (*Zeltbahn*). He is holding the general issue Karabiner 98k rifle and leather sling.



SS-*Schütze*, Panzer-Grenadier Regiment 6 'Theodor Eicke', Poland, September 1944



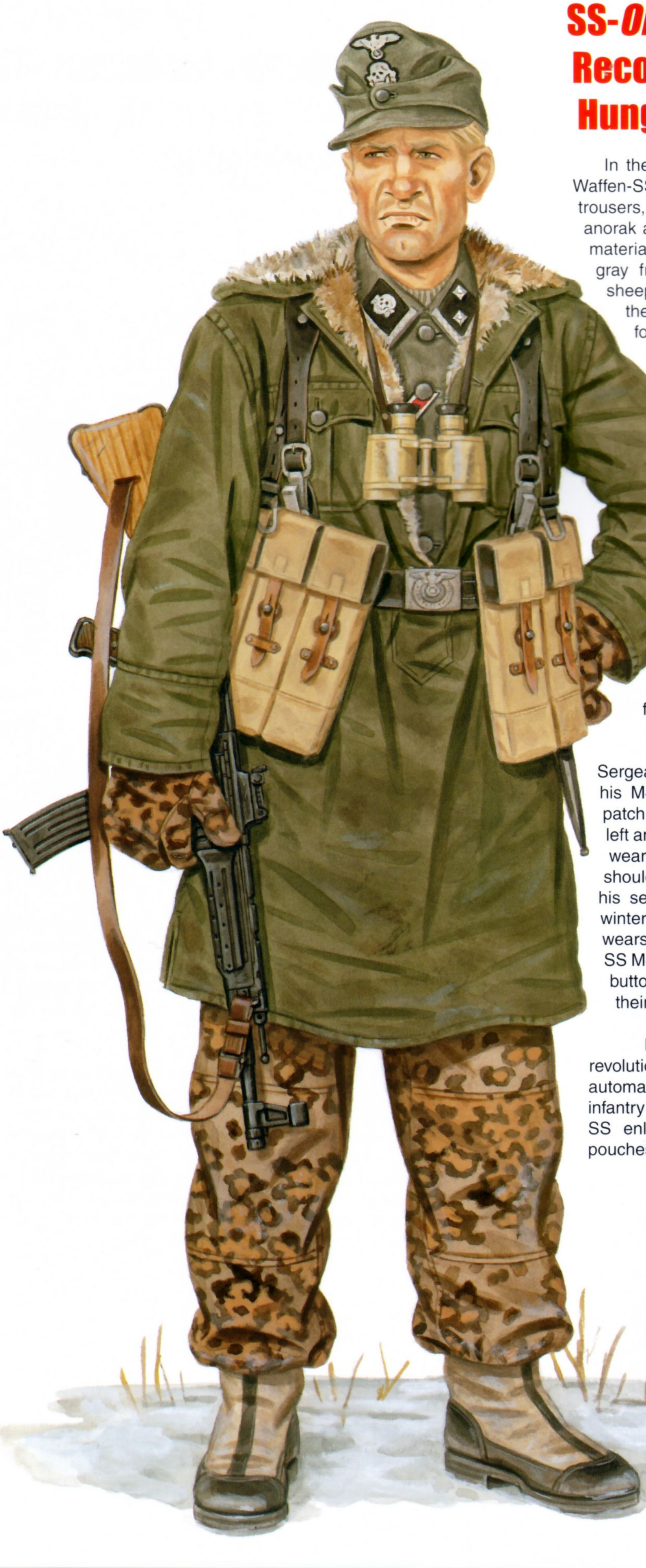
Panzer-Grenadier Regiment 6 was renamed 'Theodor Eicke' in honor of its founder and divisional commander after he was killed in February 1943. This regiment was issued a cuffband bearing his name too.

In March 1944 the M44 two-piece ('Pea' pattern) camouflage drill uniform was officially introduced. The reason for the introduction of this new camouflage uniform was that stocks of high quality duck cotton were nearly exhausted (the material used for Waffen-SS camouflage smocks, helmet covers, shelter quarters and other items of clothing). However this camouflage drill uniform was never produced in the numbers originally intended. This was to eventually replace the camouflage smock and equip all the Waffen-SS field divisions in a standard camouflage. Due to this shortage in manufacturing the new camouflage drill uniforms coincided with the early type camouflage uniforms. The cut of the uniform was similar to the M43 field gray SS service uniform; with a five-button front, plain pockets and straight cut pocket flaps. It was non-reversible unlike all previous Waffen-SS camouflage uniforms. The only insignia allowed on the uniform was the SS eagle & swastika national emblem on the left sleeve. It could to be worn over the field gray uniform or in warm weather worn on its own. The new 'Pea' pattern camouflage was designed to be suitable for all seasons.

This private is typical of the late war infantryman, wearing the SS M42 steel helmet with its flared edge, gray canvas gaiters and lace up ankle boots. Period photographs show some *Totenkopf* panzer-grenadiers wearing this new M44 camouflage drill uniform in the Warsaw area in late summer 1944, but the camouflage smock was prevalent to this division. Under his drill uniform he wears the M43 field blouse with one divisional collar patch and rank patch. This horizontal divisional collar patch is the final 'BeVo' type introduced in 1943, with the light gray 'Death's Head' facing right.

The German panzer-grenadier fought mainly in light battle order, unnecessary equipment was left in motorized or armored transport. He wears the basic rifleman's kit; the SS leather belt, late pattern leather infantry support straps, two rifle ammunition pouches, S84/98 bayonet, small entrenching tool, the M1931 bread bag, and M1931 field flask with drinking cup. His weapons comprise of the M1939 egg grenade attached to a rifle pouch strap, a mid-war production Kar 98k rifle (with its laminated wooden stock and metal butt plate) slung over his shoulder. He is holding the tank destroying 'Panzerfaust' 30.

SS-*Oberscharführer*, Reconnaissance Battalion, Hungary, January 1945



In the winter of 1944/45 the main winter uniforms issued to the Waffen-SS were; the reversible camouflaged winter suit (with its parka, trousers, mittens and unpopular toque), the M42 fur-lined hooded anorak and to a lesser extent the M44 fur-lined hooded anorak. The material outer shell for these anoraks came in various shades of field gray from an olive-green/gray through to slate gray. Fur caps, sheepskin waistcoats and felt boots were also frequently used in the severe winter months. If the Waffen-SS soldier was not fortunate enough to be issued the above he would have to resort to wearing the long surcoat or the inadequate standard greatcoat.

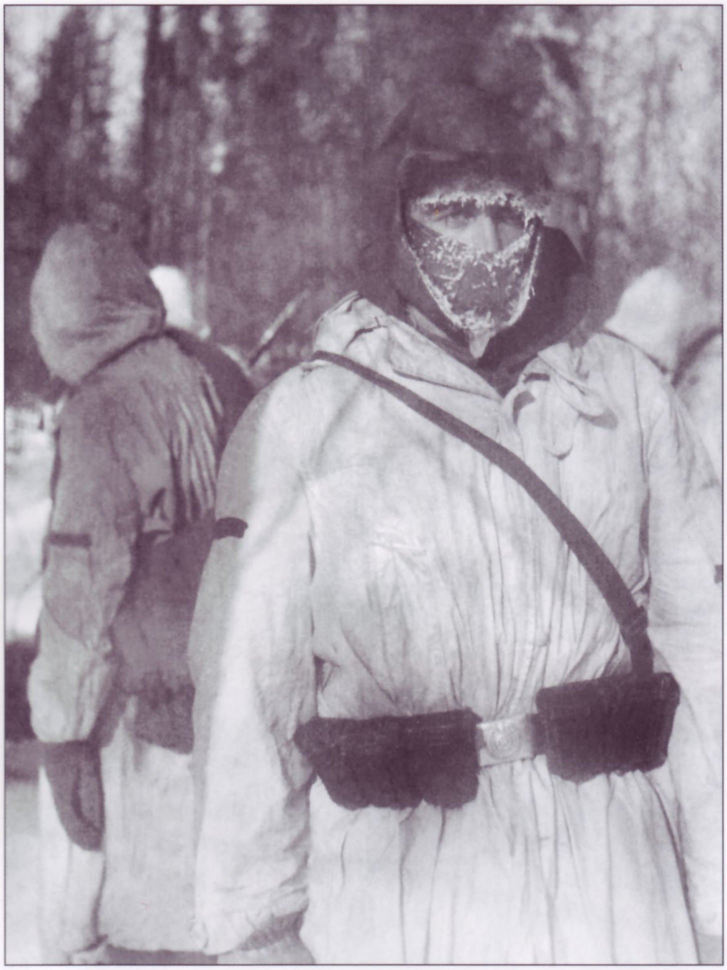
The most typical appearance of the *Totenkopf*-Division on the Eastern Front in winter was the wearing of the M42 fur-lined hooded anorak. This winter clothing item was efficient at keeping the soldier warm in a static position, but had a number of disadvantages. It made the soldier too warm in fluid combat conditions. As pullover type garment buttoning only half way down it was not easy to ventilate, too heavy & too long. The M44 anorak tried to remedy some of these flaws, but was never produced in sufficient numbers to replace its earlier counter part. For all that, the M42 fur-lined hooded anorak would remain the most dominant winter clothing item for Waffen-SS divisions who mainly fought in the east.

Under his M42 fur-lined hooded anorak this SS Color-Sergeant wears the usual field gray service uniform. The insignia on his M41 field blouse is the first type horizontal divisional collar patch, machine embroidered in an off-white 'Death's Head' facing left and opposite a rank collar patch with two metal stars. This NCO wears the war pattern light gray 'tresse' trim on his collar and shoulder straps. Just seen is the 2nd class iron cross ribbon. Over his service trousers he wears a pair of reversible camouflaged winter suit trousers in autumn/winter 'Oak Leaf' pattern. He also wears the winter suit mittens. He has a variant single button type SS M43 field cap whereas the other M43 field cap came with a two-button front. He wears a pair of late pattern felt winter boots with their distinctive minimum leather parts.

He carries the 'Sturmgewehr 44' also known as the MP44, a revolutionary weapon that was to replace the bolt-action rifle, automatic rifles and sub-machine guns. His equipment is basic; M39 infantry support straps, 6x30 field binoculars painted in ordnance tan, SS enlisted mans belt with attached MP44 canvas magazine pouches and a S84/98 bayonet.

Wearing their winter camouflage clothing *Totenkopf* soldiers advance through a forested area during operations in the Demyansk Pocket in late February 1942. By this period Hitler had ordered that the trapped divisions should not under any circumstances try to breakout to the west. Instead they were to hold fast and be supplied from the air by the *Luftwaffe*.

Totenkopf soldiers in full winter kit prepare to move out to do battle against Red Army ski troops. In an attempt to defeat the terrible cold, some of the men are wearing woollen toque, scarf and gloves. Hooked to each soldier's Y-straps is the webbing assault pack consisting of an A-frame to which are attached their mess tin, gas mask canister with gas cape, personal kit and ration bag, and rolled *Zeltbahn*, hanging from the belt are the soldier's bread bag, water bottle and entrenching tool, with a Mauser 98k bayonet strapped to its carrier.



A *Totenkopf* soldier well protected from the extreme arctic temperatures. He is wearing the standard equipment for a rifleman with the usual belt and cartridge pouches. The cold affected almost everything the Germans used and this made life, especially the first winter on the Eastern Front, very difficult. The arctic temperatures made it necessary for the troops to use any means possible to overcome the immense problems they faced in a subzero environment.

A *Totenkopf* unit on the move. Shelter for these soldiers trapped in the Demyansk Pocket was at a premium. Soviet fighters and bombers regularly dropped incendiary bombs on any forms of shelter used by the Germans. This could include complete villages and towns, which were devastated without regard for the cost to their inhabitants. A number of *Totenkopf* units chose to live out in the open, although living in such extreme temperatures without shelter not only caused acute problems for the men, but also caused terrible problems with the equipment.

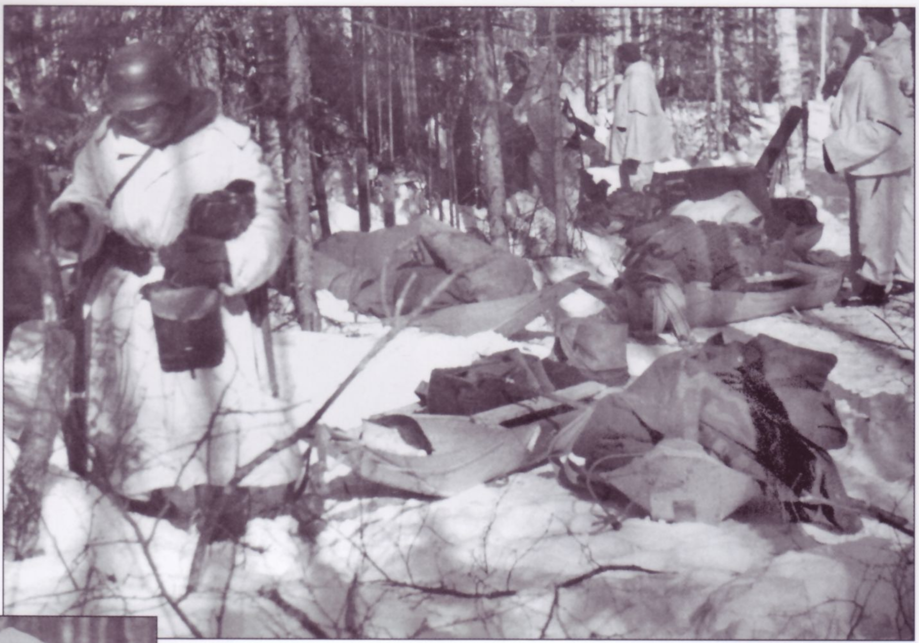
In action against Siberian ski troops, a *Totenkopf* mortar crew prepare to fire a shell. Because Waffen-SS troops were often used as special fire brigade units, being moved from one disintegrating front to another, fighting rearguard actions as often as not, inevitably there were times when they became encircled and had to undertake daring breakout operations using just their own resources.

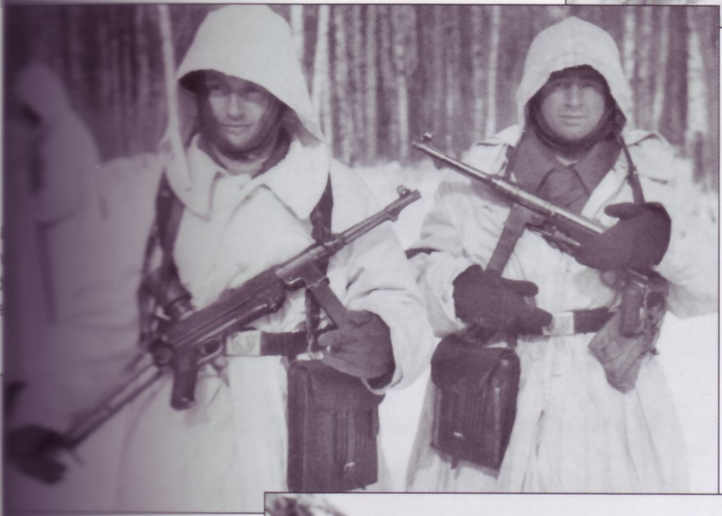
A *Totenkopf* MG34 machine gun team open fire against ene positions in the snow. Note the color of the camouflage smocks, dirt a grime were making them an ineffective item of camouflage clothi although the Demyansk Pocket had seen a series of terrible disasters for t *Totenkopf* and their *Wehrmacht* counterparts, they had stood resolute. Pr had led the *Totenkopf* to make sacrifice after sacrifice, fighting to hold t line to allow other units to escape the impending doom.

Fighting in the Demyansk Pocket continued with unabated ferocity *Totenkopf* blunted relentless Red Army assaults. Few other units could ha endured or shown such confidence in the face of such overwhelming od but these soldiers of the *Totenkopf*-Division still continued to fight for th *Führer.*

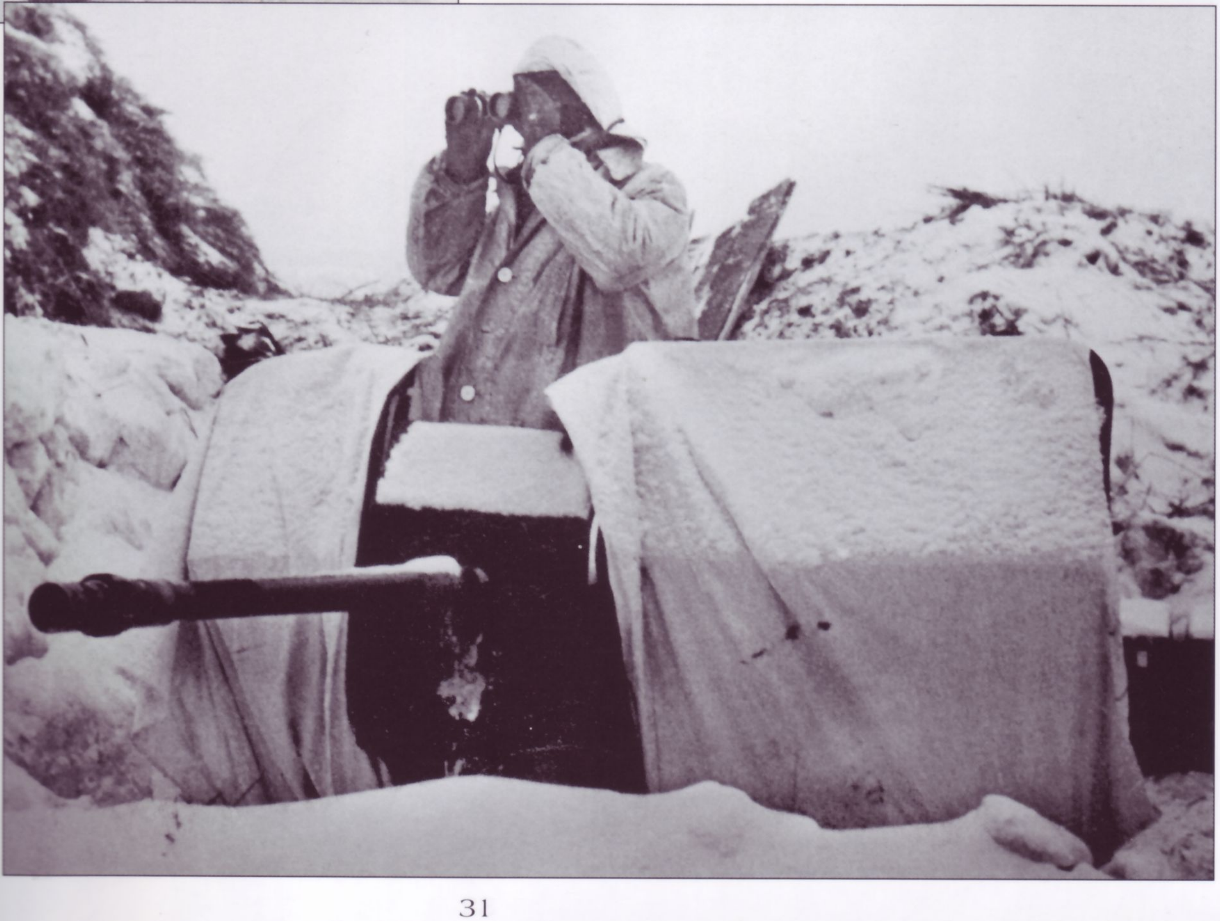
Totenkopf troops supported by a Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.J slowly advance through the snow in March 1942. The tank has received an application of winter wh wash paint. Tanks had only limited cross-country endurance, and this also applied to snow terrain as well. Armored crews often found themselves inchi forward, and invariably ground to a halt in deep snow.

Totenkopf soldiers set up a temporary position for the night sleep in a forest during a lull in the Red Army attacks in late March 1942. Although the front might have felt comparatively quiet during a lull, the troops were well aware of the constant dangers of suddenly being attacked by a Soviet night patrol. In order to keep relatively mobile in the snow, the troops are using sleds to pull their supplies.

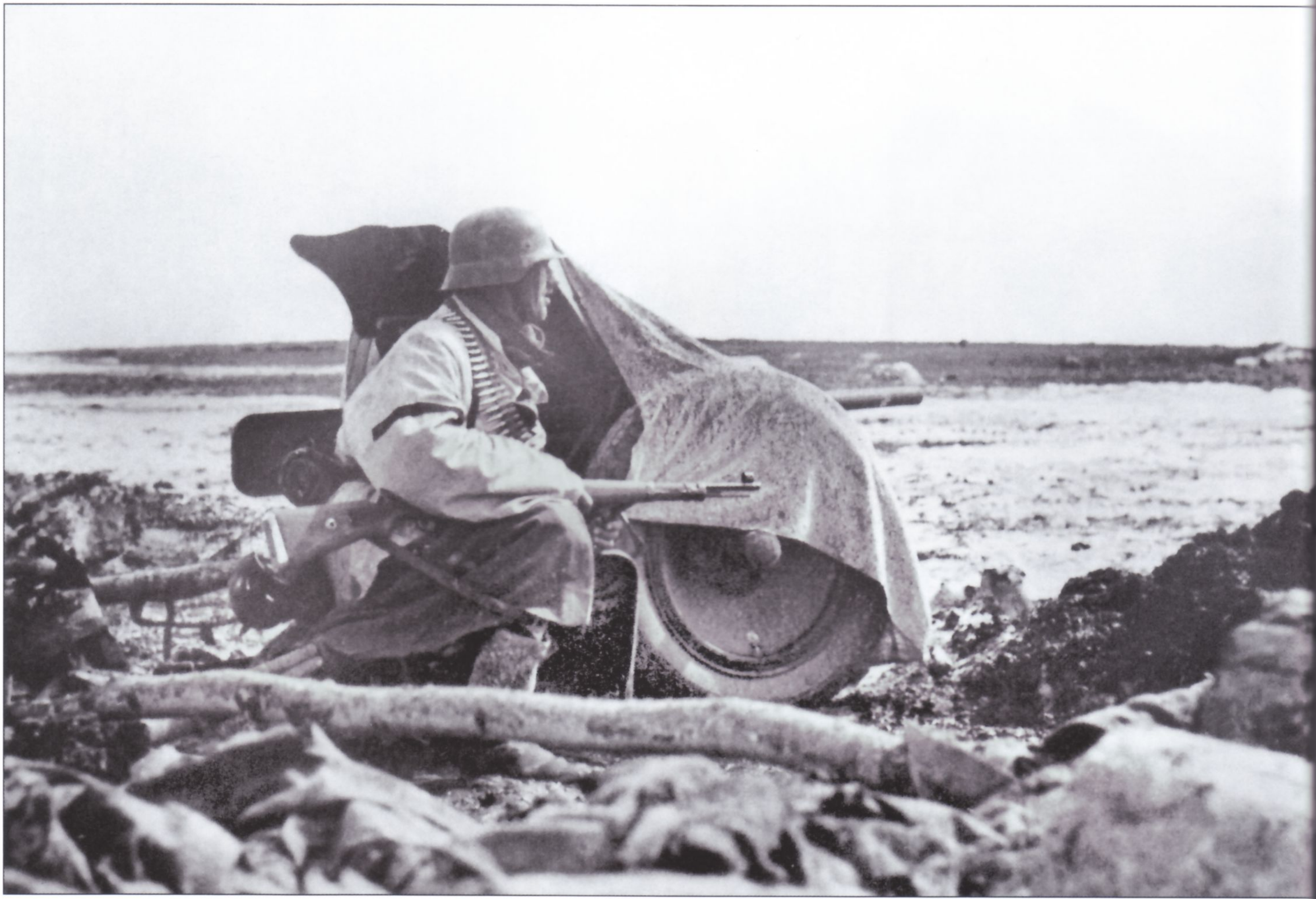




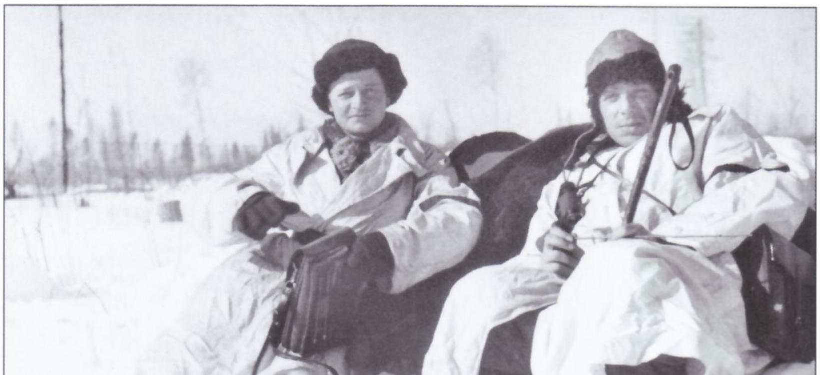
Wearing white camouflage smocks with toques, two *Totenkopf* soldiers are armed with MP38/40 sub-machine guns. Attached to their belt are M1935 dispatch cases. The soldier on the right also wears one of his magazine pouches on the belt. His comrade has a stick grenade tucked into his belt.



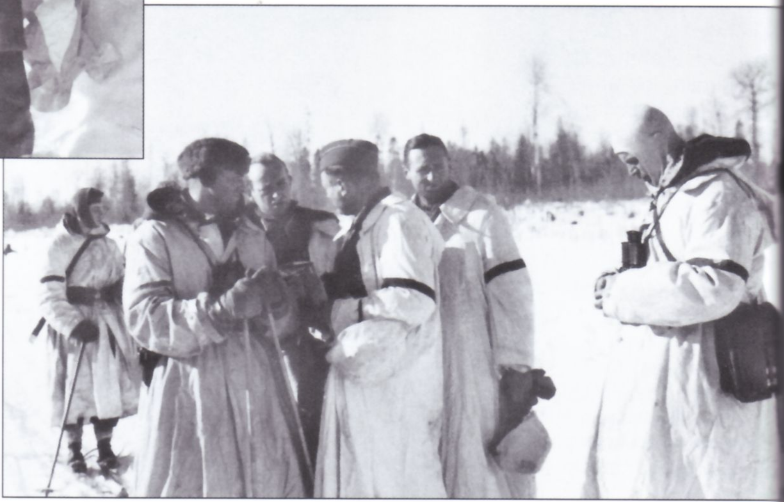
A *Totenkopf* antiaircraft gun commander scans the winter terrain for any signs of approaching Soviet forces. The 2cm Flak30 gun has been draped with white sheeting to help blend the weapon with the surrounding terrain. This type of cheap but effective camouflage was used throughout the war, especially by 1944, when many units did not have the time or resources to whitewash their weapons and vehicles.



A 3.7cm Pak35/36 antitank gun has been partly covered with white sheeting in order to break up its distinctive shape and camouflage it against the ar
terrain. Also making every effort to use camouflage to the best advantage, the soldier wears the top part of his uniform with the white side out, but has chos
to leave the gray side of his trousers showing.

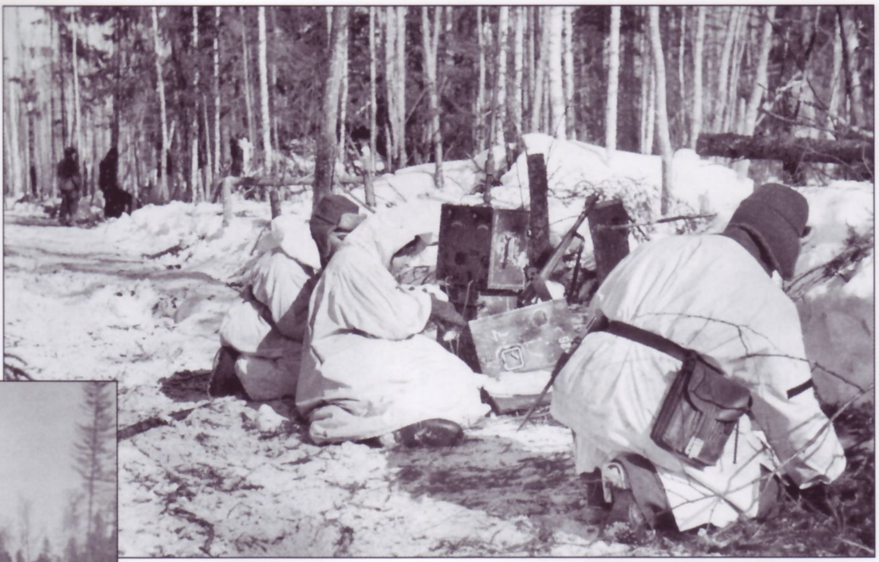


Sitting on a mound of snow, two soldiers pose for the came
Note the soldier on the left wearing German versions of t
Soviet-style felt boots. Both men are also wearing the fur pile c
which were issued to troops in the East with or without insign
These items of clothing may not have been of official issue, b
from captured Soviet stocks.

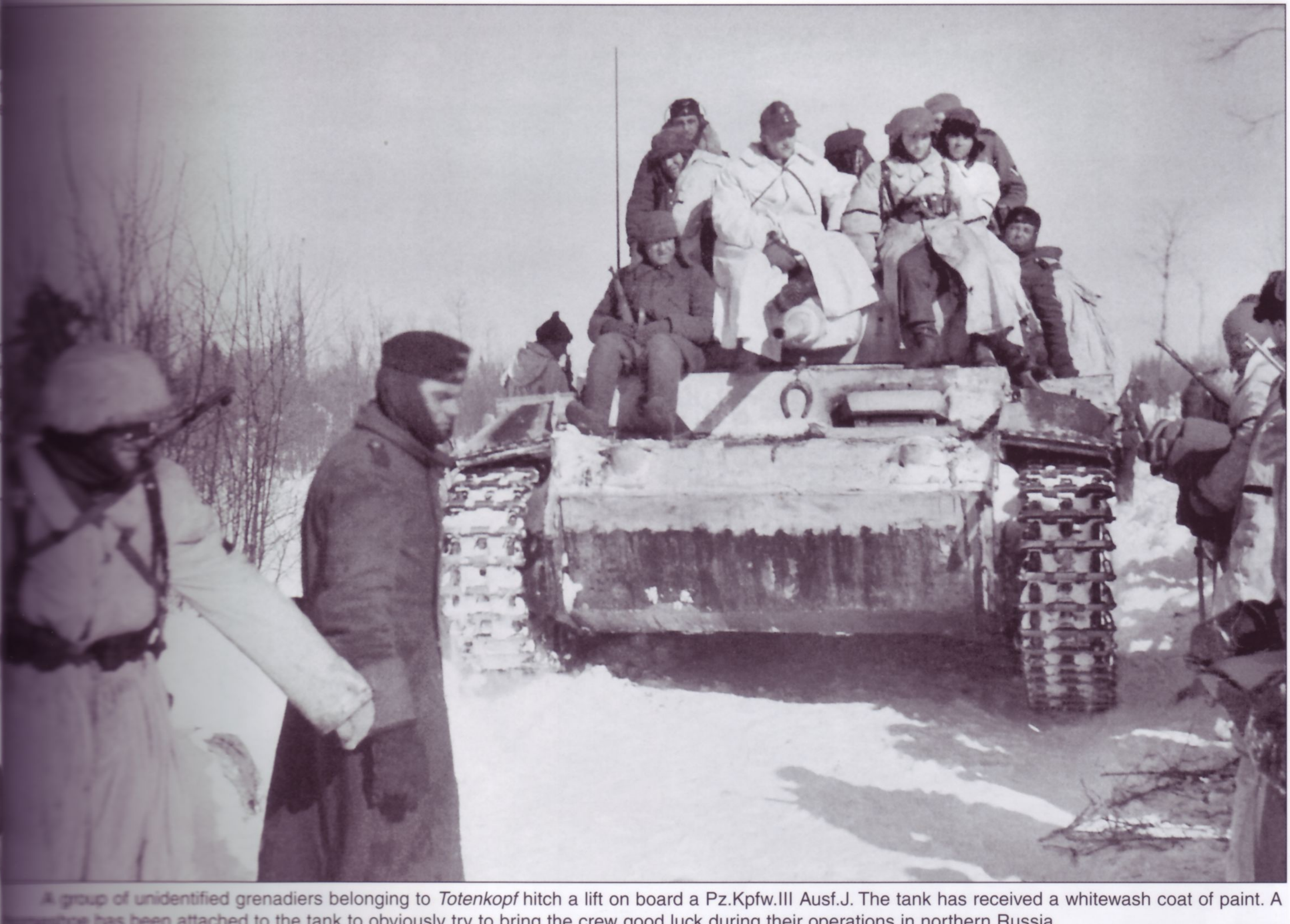


A group of soldiers discuss the situation at the front in March 1942. All the troops are wearing snow overalls, which were another form of white snow camouflage clothing worn by Waffen-SS and *Wehrmacht* units during this period. Large and shapeless it was normally worn without a belt over any uniform and all equipment. However, this item of clothing did not prove to be as practical as the snowsuit as it tended to restrict the wearer's freedom of movement.

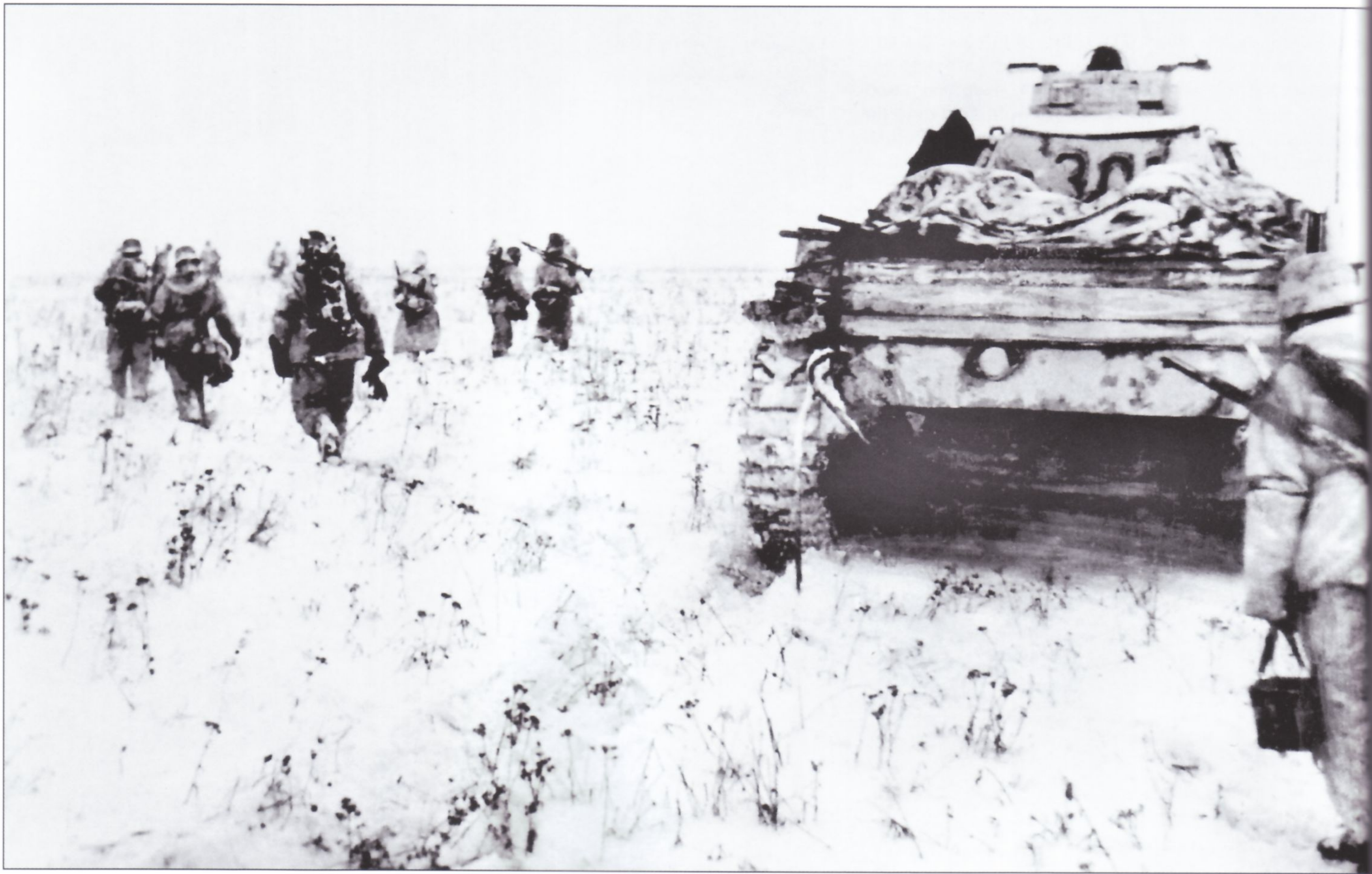
Radio operators laying lines of communication in a forest clearing in late March 1942. Two of the soldiers can be seen wearing with their snow camouflage garments fur-covered caps. They were issued to both *Wehrmacht* and Waffen-SS units in 1942. The fur caps were field-gray fur trimmed form of headdress. Remaining stocks of crash liners from old discontinued Panzer berets were utilised in the making of these fur caps.



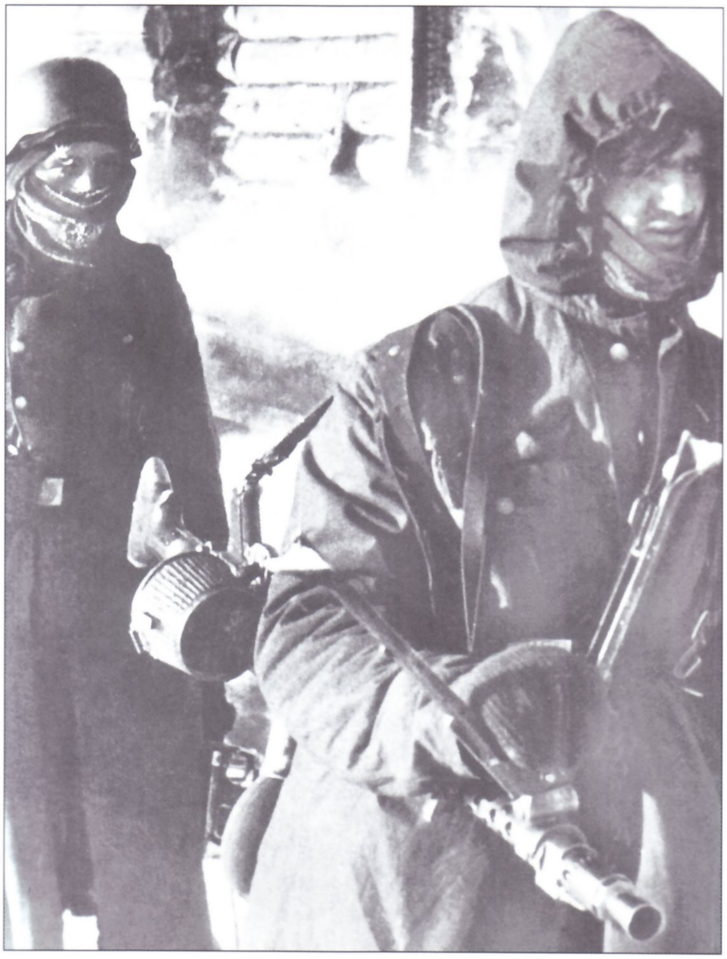
A brief respite during fighting in the Demyansk Pocket. By this period *Totenkopf* were on the verge of destruction. Preparations had already been made for an attempt to relieve the pocket. However, Soviet resistance was fierce and in spite of numerous attempts to break out west, *Totenkopf* were pushed slowly back through Russian defensive positions east of the pocket.



A group of unidentified grenadiers belonging to *Totenkopf* hitch a lift on board a Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.J. The tank has received a whitewash coat of paint. A horseshoe has been attached to the tank to obviously try to bring the crew good luck during their operations in northern Russia.

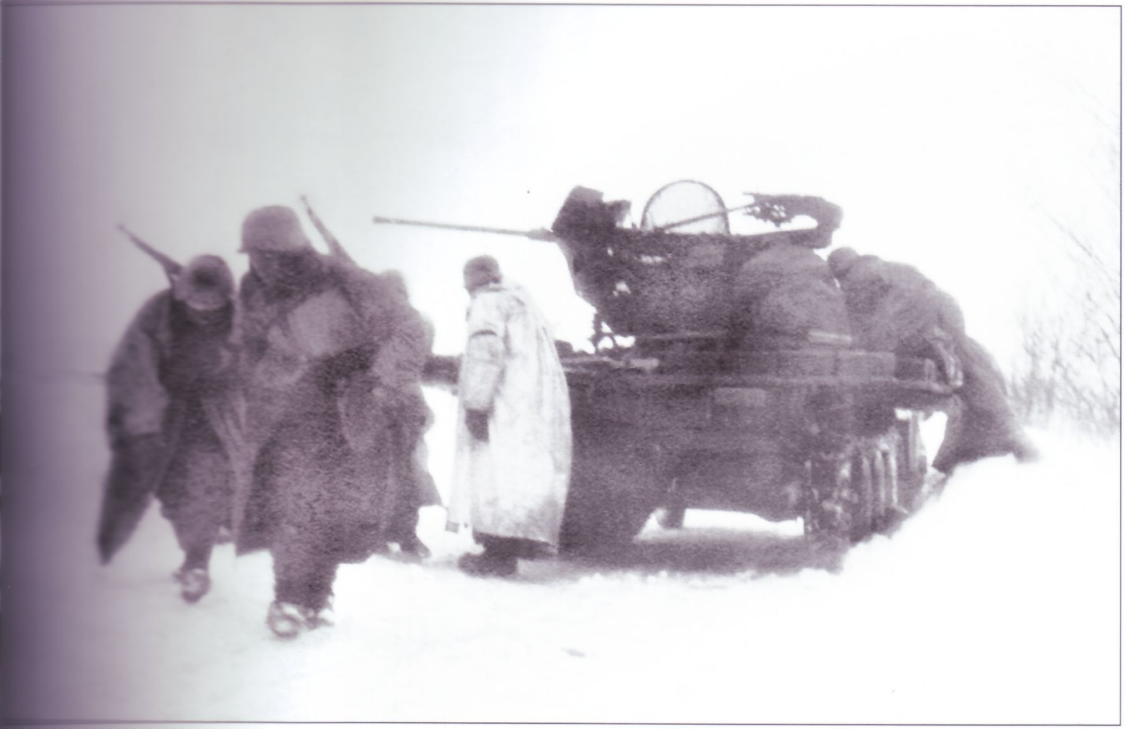


Totenkopf troops advance across the vast open steppe supported by a Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.J. The tank has received an application of winter whitewash pai whilst the soldiers are clearly wearing the two-piece snowsuit. All of the troops appear to be heavily laden with equipment. This unit is attached to S *Obergruppenführer* Paul Hausser's 1.SS-Panzer-Korps, which boasted along with *Totenkopf*, formidable armored force.



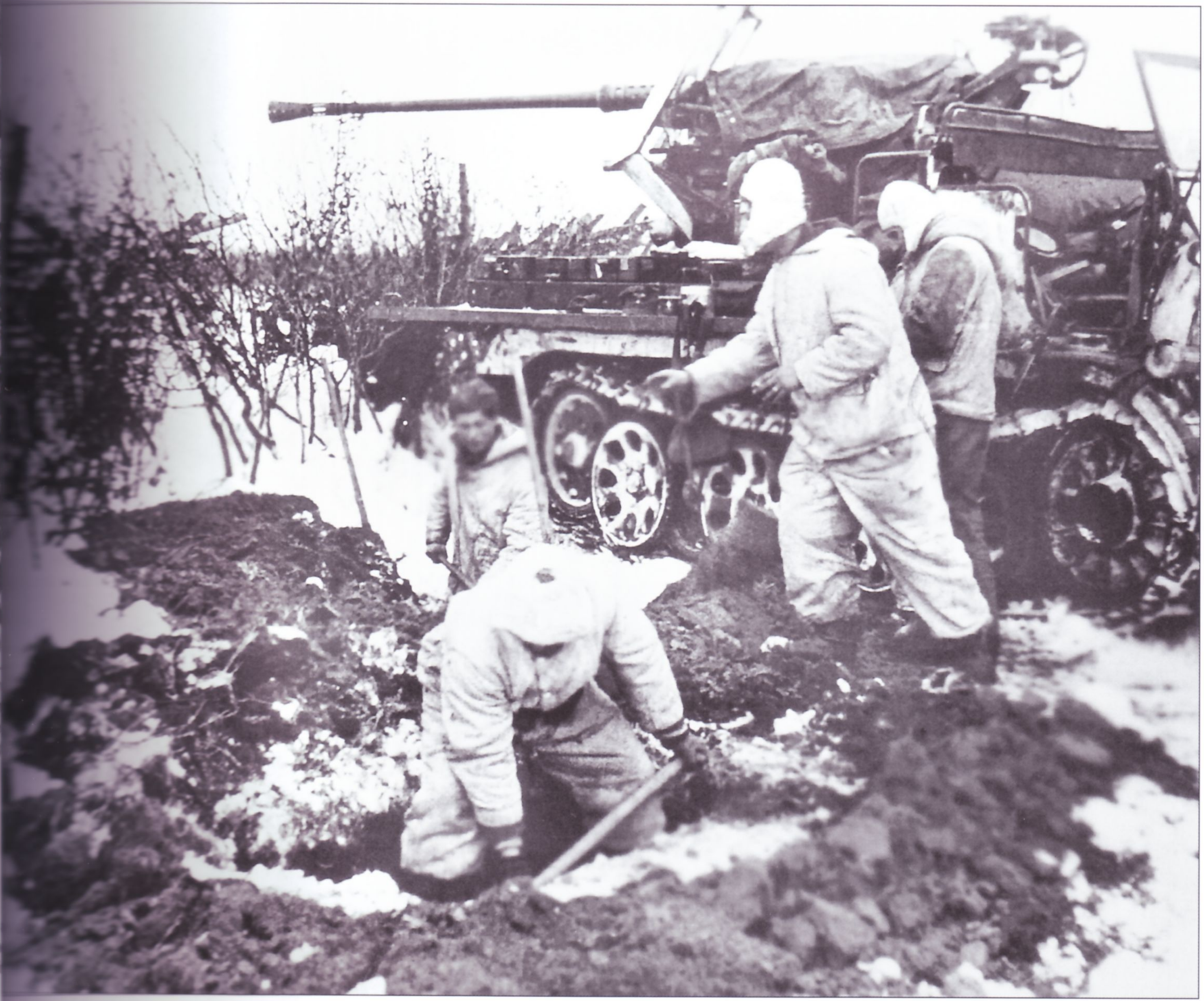
Slowly moving forward through the undergrowth both soldiers a equipped for the bitter cold weather as they take up arms against Red Arm positions in February 1943. Along with the equipment, they carry the weapons, loaded and ready to put to use. A Pz.Kpfw.III can be seen throug the trees in the background.

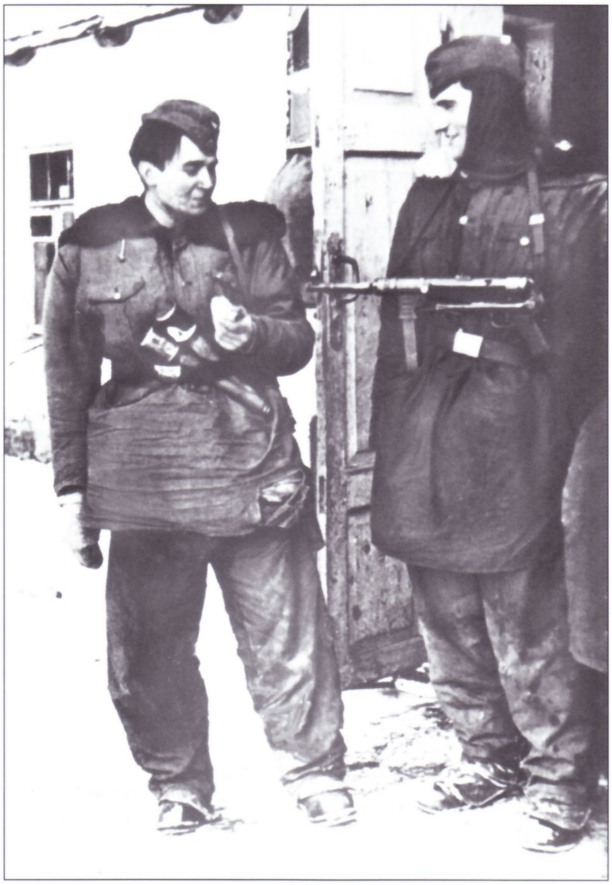
A *Totenkopf* MG34 machine-gunner trudges through the snow during blizzard, followed by his crewmember. The machine-gunner is wearing th reversible overcoat gray-side out with hood. This photograph was taken February 1943 between Kiev and Poltava.



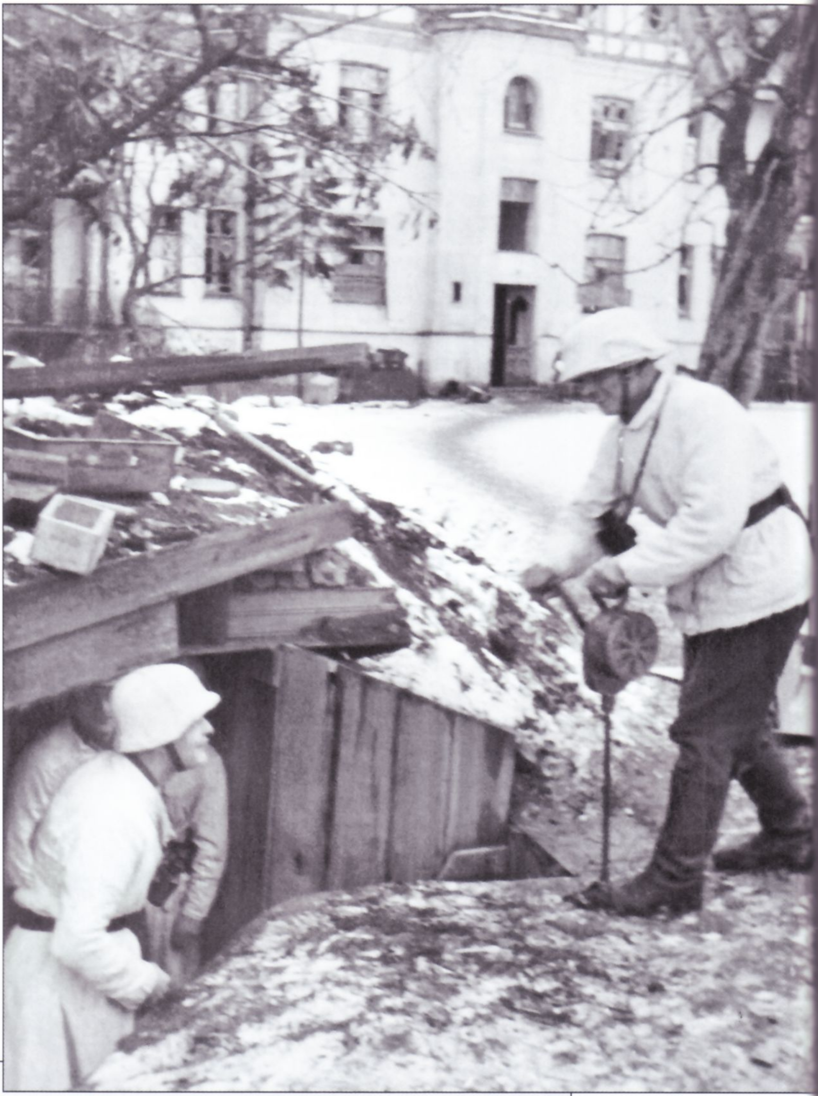
These soldiers belonging to *Totenkopf* were photographed in the heat of battle in February 1943. Their vehicle is a Sd.Kfz.10/5 armed with a 2cm Flak38 antiaircraft gun. In spite of the snow the halftrack has not received any application of winter whitewash paint. It is more than likely that the Division had not enough time to paint any type of winter camouflage following its arrival by train from France weeks earlier.

Dressed in their winter white camouflage smocks a *Totenkopf* flak crew dig in during a lull in the fighting in February 1943. Their vehicle is an Sd.Kfz.6 armed with a 3.7cm Flak36 antiaircraft gun. Unlike the top photograph, this halftrack has received an application of winter whitewash paint. However, the majority of the whitewash has since faded and only traces can be seen on parts of the vehicle.





Two *Totenkopf* soldiers that appear to be on guard duty in early 1943. The man on the left is wearing a fur lined anorak with toque and *feldmütze* cap. He is armed with an MP40 machine pistol. His comrade is also wearing similar clothing, but is armed with a pair of M1920 stick grenades tucked into his belt.



Totenkopf infant
take to a shelter as
air raid siren sound
This photograph wa
taken in Februa
1943, which suggests
may have been taken
the city of Ki
Totenkopf ha
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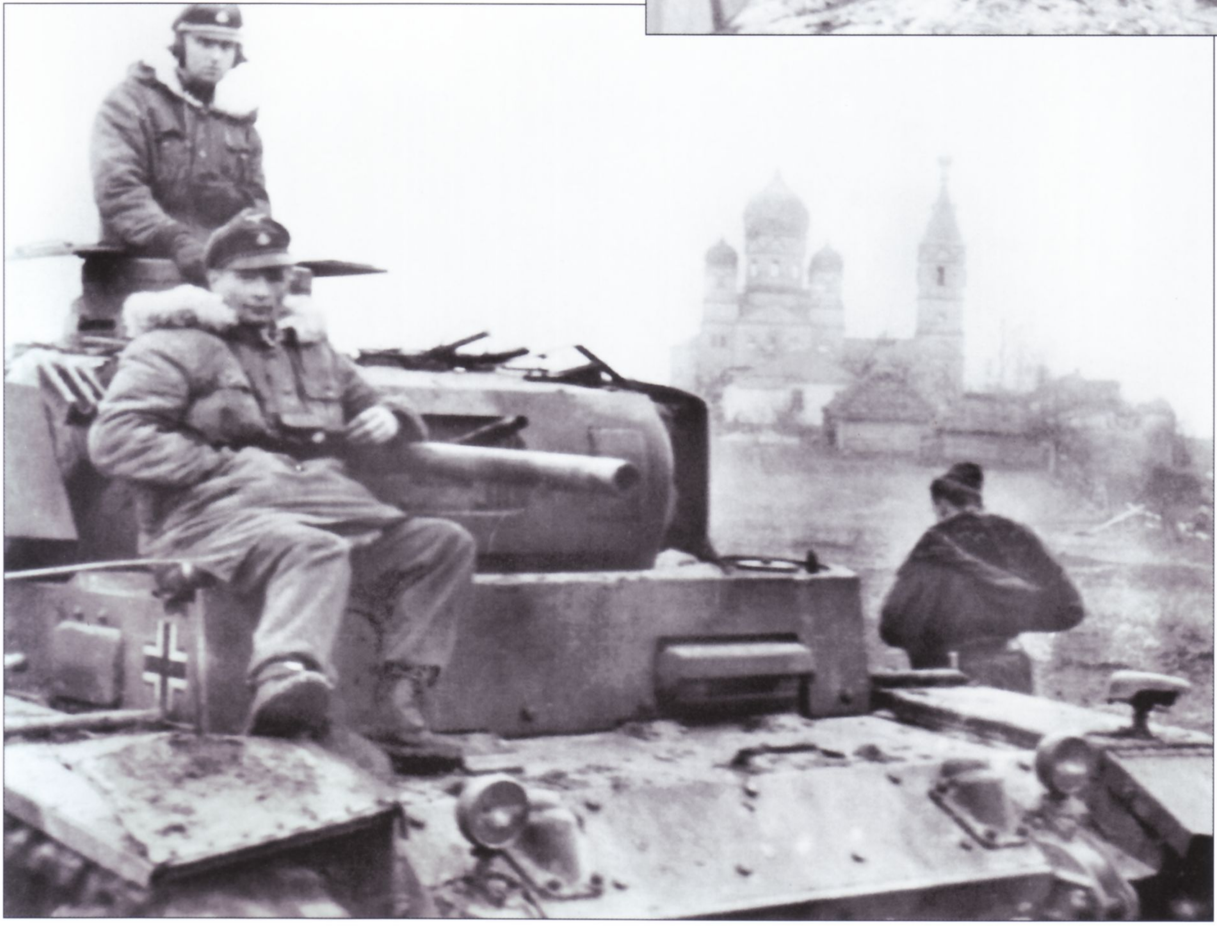
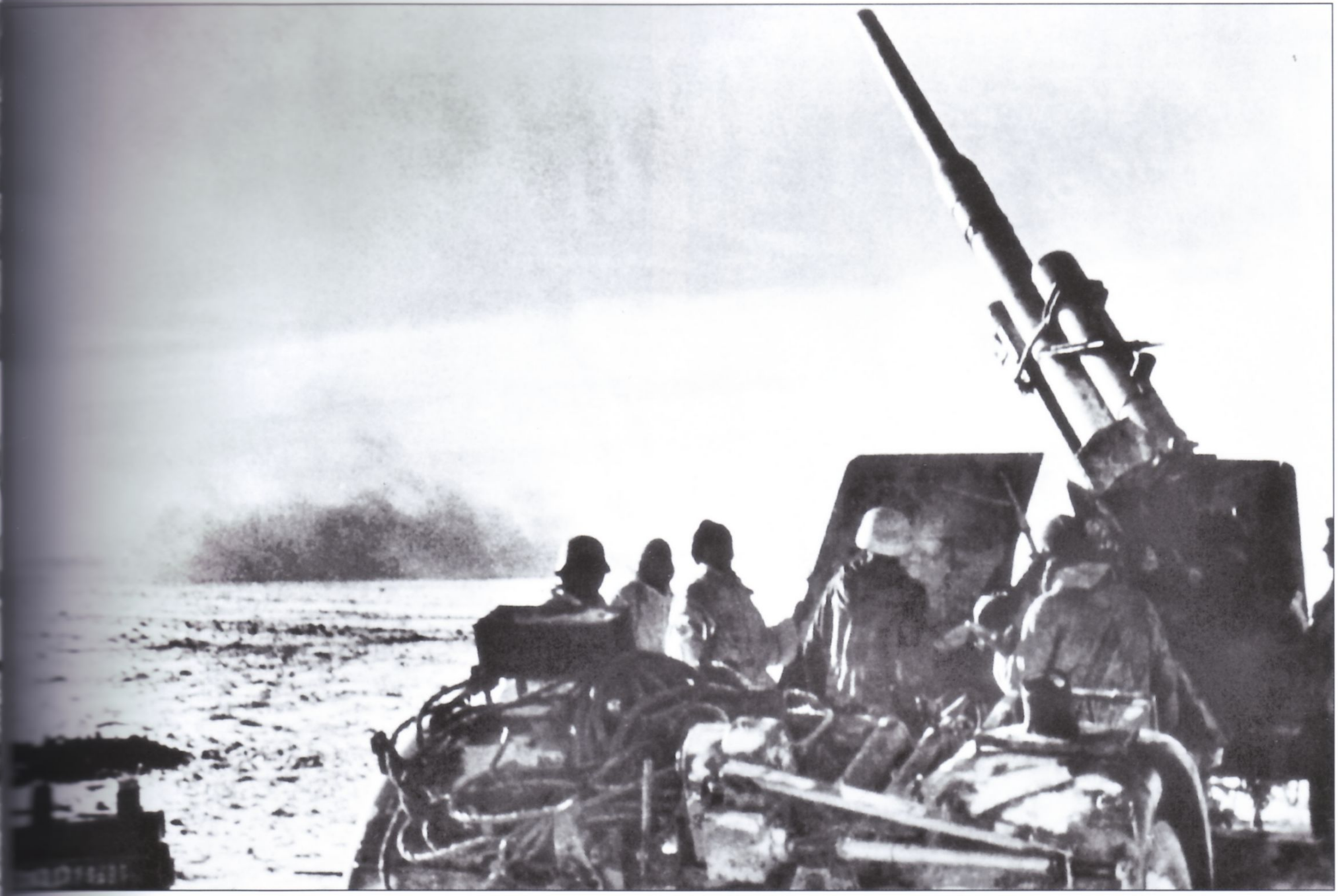
following its long tra
journey from Bordeau
Both the soldiers a
wearing cotton clo
white helmet cove
with their white sno
camouflage garments

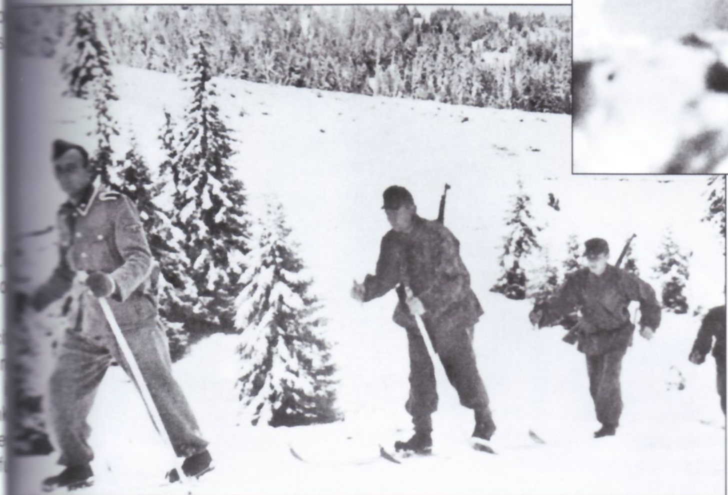


A Pz.BeobWg.
Ausf.H observati
tank has halted on
road outside the c
limits of Kharkov durin
the battle there
March 1943. The tank
crew wear the ne
Waffen-SS winter f
lined anorak.



An elevated 8.8cm Flak gun joins in the action and fires a series of salvoes at Soviet positions in early March 1943. Although known for its antiaircraft capabilities the Waffen-SS and *Wehrmacht* often used the '88' to deadly effect against massed ground forces. With its high muzzle velocity and heavy projectile it has made it an ideal tank-killer.

A *Totenkopf* crew in action in the snow with their 7.5cm Pak40 antitank gun. This was an excellent antitank gun able to deal with almost any enemy armor.

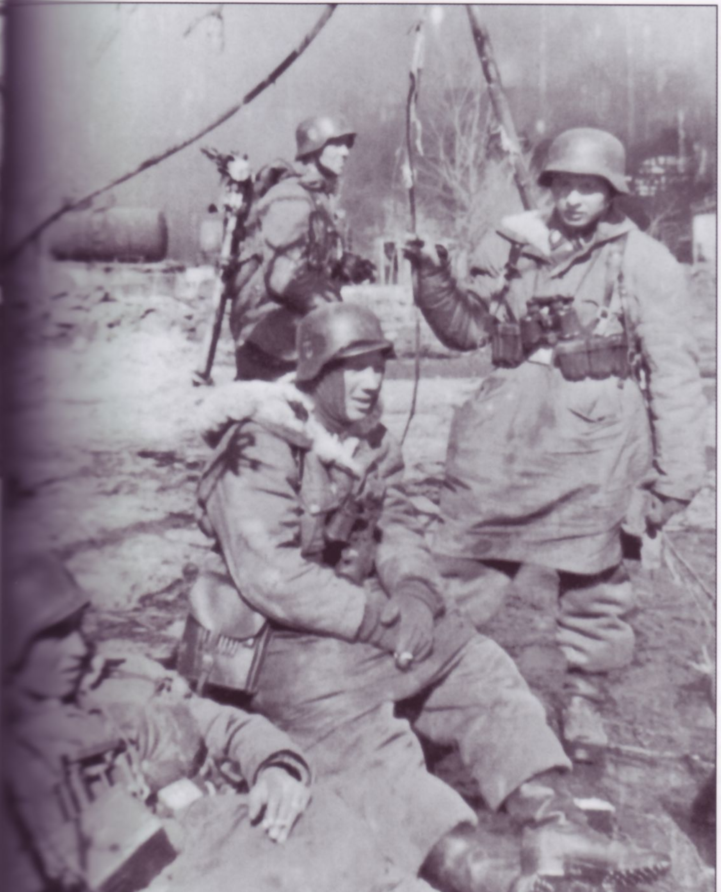


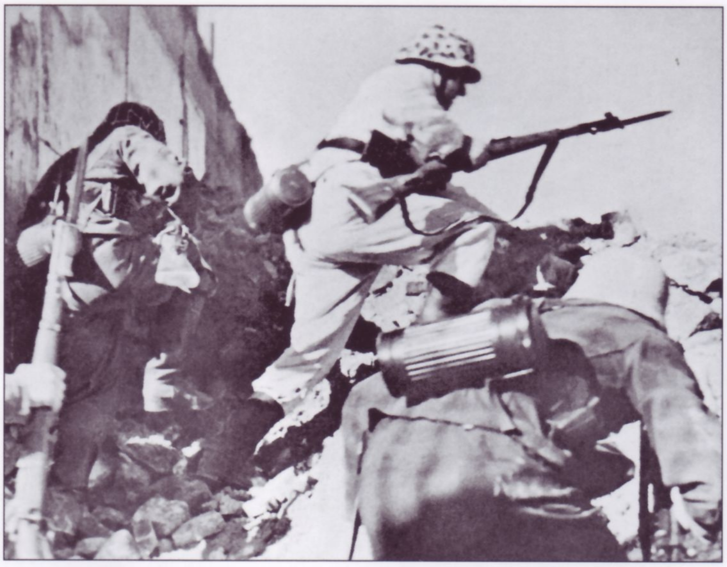
An unidentified *Totenkopf* ski unit advance through the snow during a reconnaissance patrol. The troops are armed with the Kar 98k rifle that can be seen slung over their left shoulder. They are wearing the usual rifleman's belt and 98k pouches worn with the bread bag and bayonet.

A group of *Totenkopf* soldiers making every effort to use camouflage to their best advantage in the snow. All the men are dressed in reversible clothing that allows them to wear white or gray, depending on the season and weather conditions. Note how constant wear has turned their normally white garments into a dirty grubby appearance.

Totenkopf troops pause during operatio crushing the last Red Army force blocking the pa to Kharkov. By 5 March 1943, *Totenkopf* and *D Reich* linked up with Hoth's 4.Panzer-Armee for a offensive to take Kharkov by surrounding it.

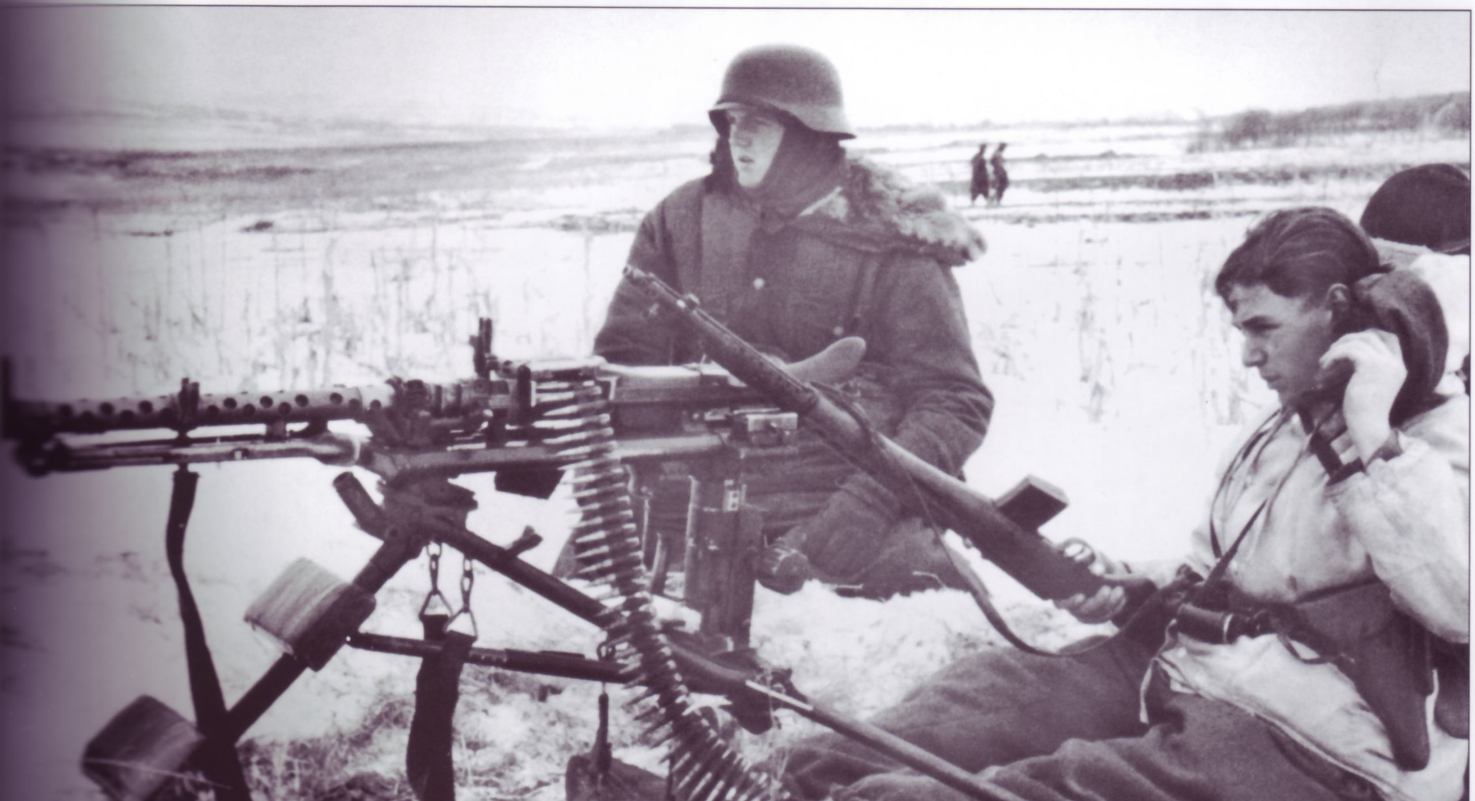
Grenadiers armed with Mauser rifles and an MG42 machine gun advance across a field. The soldier to the right of the MG42 machine gunner is carryi MG ammunition boxes, which probably indicates he's the MG feeder. This photograph is typical of a winter combat zone in the last two years of the war. Th soldiers are all wearing toques and camouflage smocks over their greatcoats.



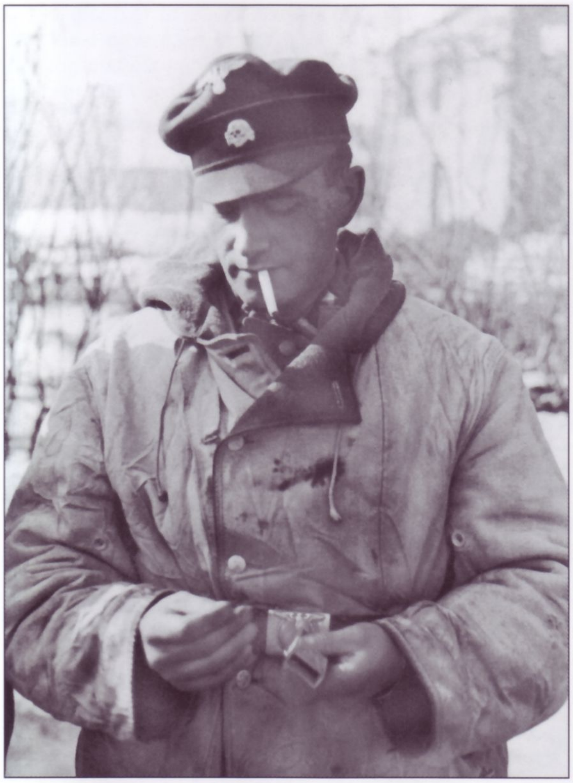


Although this photograph is generally regarded as being taken during the fighting in the Demyansk Pocket in early 1942, it is in fact *Totenkopf* launching a counter-attack inside the city of Kharkov in late March 1943. Note the soldier dressed in the single-piece snow overall with camouflage helmet cover. He is armed with a Kar 98k rifle with fixed bayonet. The bayonet is a clear indication of the close quarter fighting that raged inside the city limits. The corrugated gas mask holders they are all wearing are by now used purely for storage purposes.

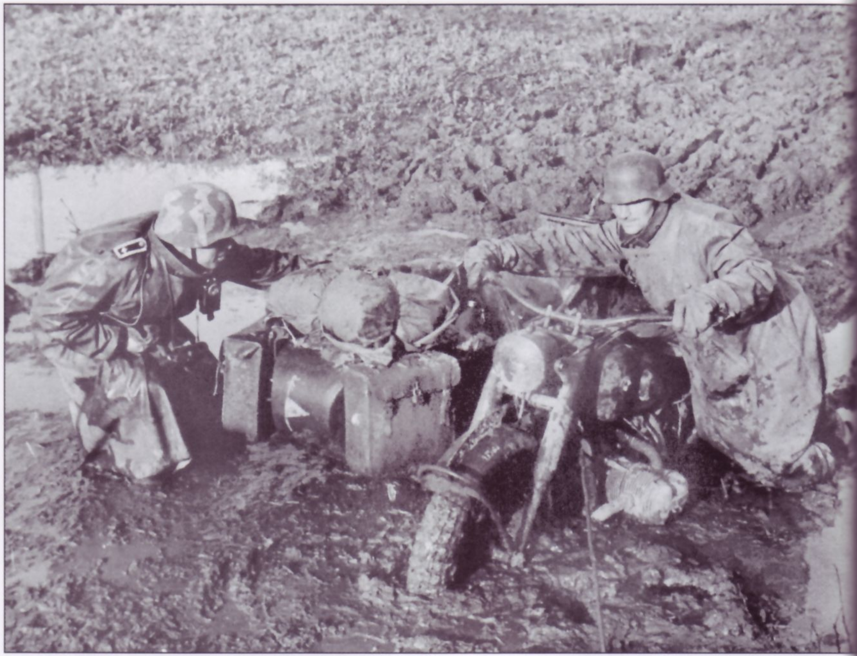
During the battle for Kharkov in March 1943, a heavy mortar team pause for a rest, whilst fires rage around them. All the men are wearing the new winter fur lined anorak.



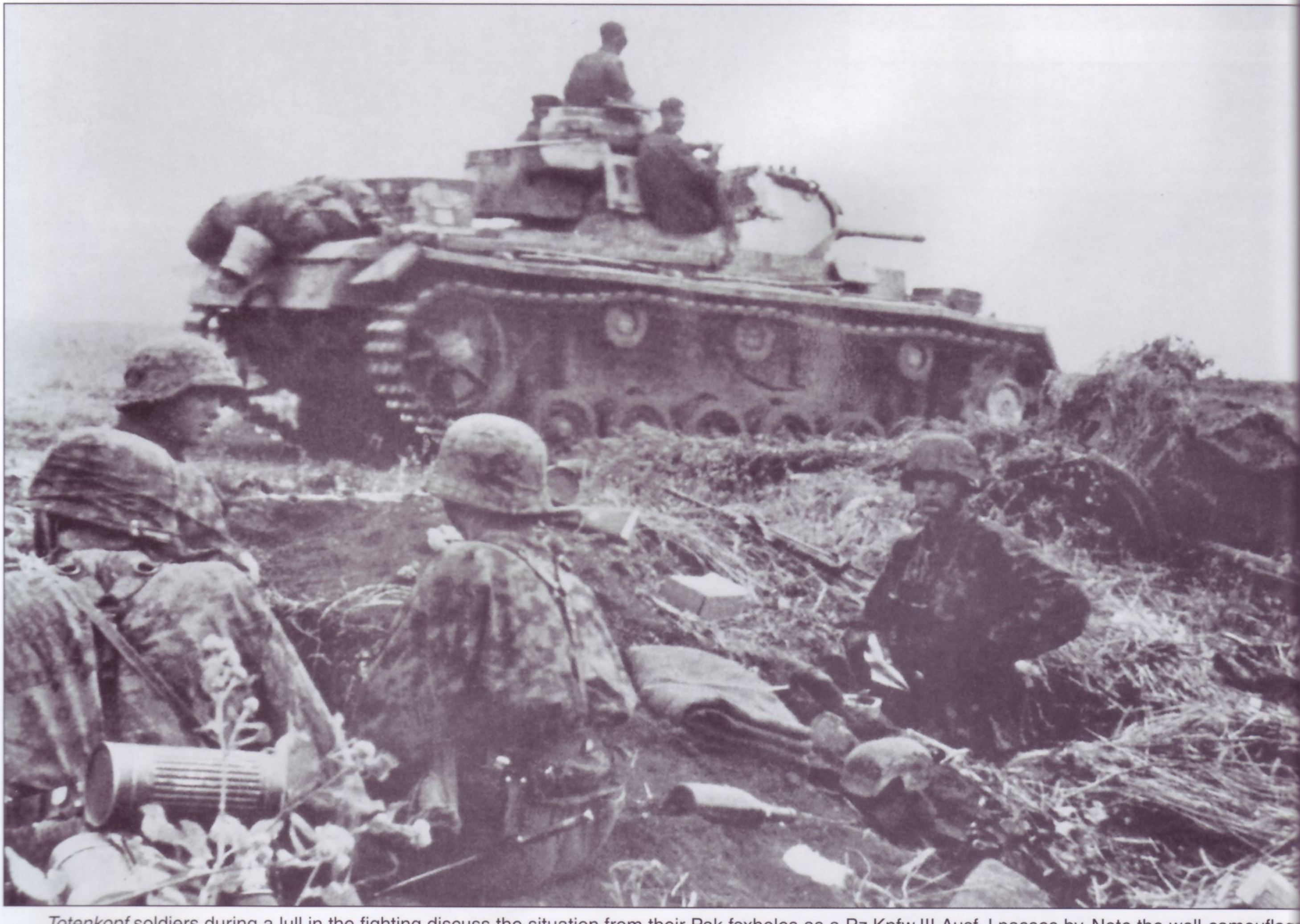
An MG machine gun team in the snow prepares to go into action using a tripod for long range firing. Although clearly out in the open the *Totenkopf* MG team could put up prodigious amounts of fire in defense with just one single machine-gun.



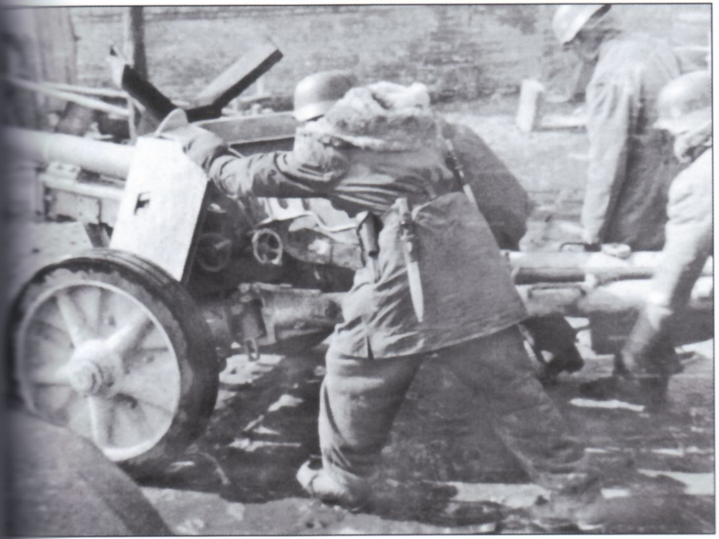
A *Totenkopf* SS-*Hauptsturmführer* pauses during a lull in the fighting and lights a cigarette. Worn over his officer's tunic is the reversible gray/white two-piece winter suit.



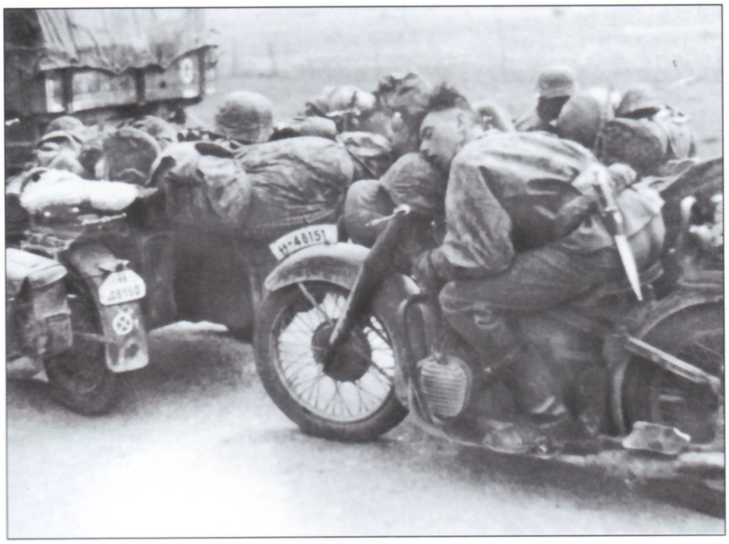
Two soldiers with their BMW R75 motorcycle combination struggle through the mud a typical Russian road. Throughout the war the bad road system in the East sever hindered mobility. This particular road has been badly damaged by the cross-coun movement of tracked vehicles. The use of main roads was restricted, generally to prio class vehicles such as tanks and halftracks. Next in priority came the ammunition colum and petrol lorry convoys, and then the reinforcements needed to nourish the advance. T nearer to the battle zone, the worse the road system became as vehicles churned up ground.



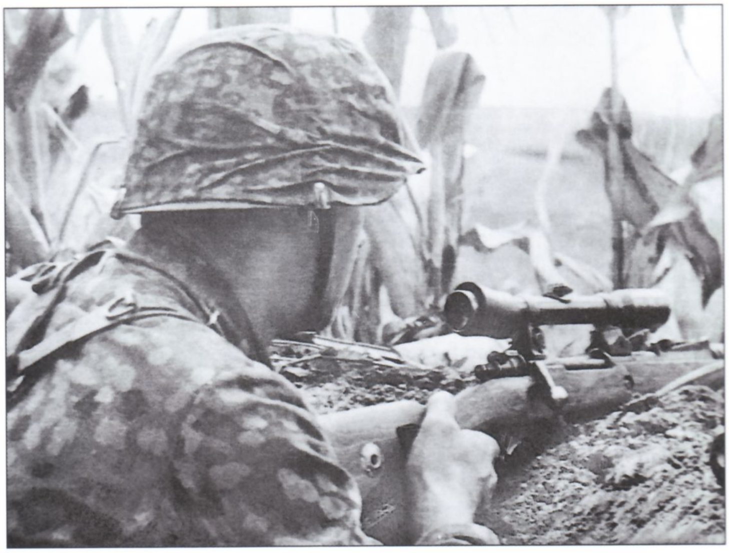
Totenkopf soldiers during a lull in the fighting discuss the situation from their Pak foxholes as a Pz.Kpfw.III Ausf.J passes by. Note the well-camouflag 7.5cm Pak40 gun to the right of the troops. The soldier on the left is wearing an early style 'palm' pattern camouflage smock while the others have the 'pla tree' patterns.



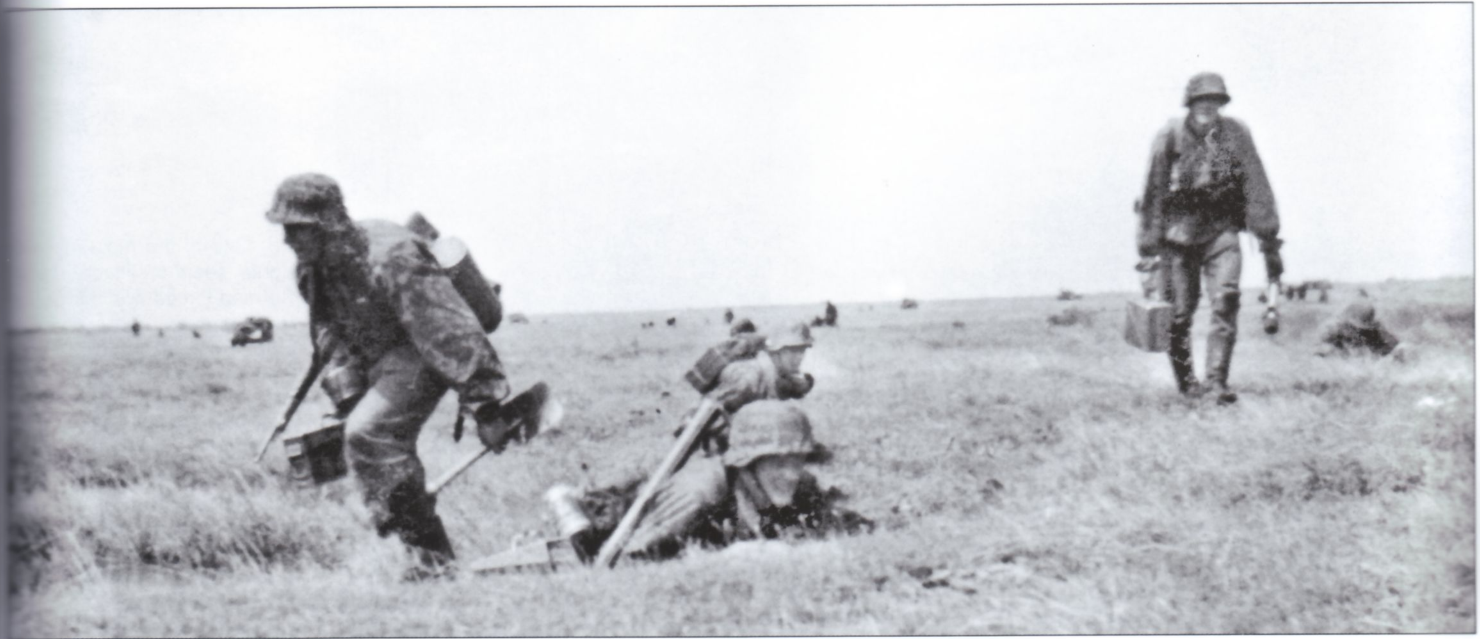
About to render the air with a round from their 7.5cm Pak40, an antitank crew from an unidentified *Totenkopf* regiment moves their gun into position in preparation against enemy targets. The gun has received an application of winter whitewash paint, whilst the crew are camouflaged with gray, which is the best color for blending in with the landscape in the late autumn and early spring in Russia.



In preparation for 'Operation Zitadelle' in late June 1943, troops and armor move forward to their specially designated allotted areas, waiting for orders to move into action. Here an exhausted *Totenkopf* motorcyclist sleeps on his BMW R12 motorcycle, among other parked motorcycles. Note the amount of equipment attached to the motorcycles including steel helmets.



A *Totenkopf* soldier armed with a Kar 98k rifle takes a well-concealed firing position inside a sunflower field during the opening attack at Kursk in July 1943. He is wearing the 'plane tree' or 'oak leaf' camouflage smock with matching helmet cover. The photograph illustrates just how effective the SS camouflage smocks and helmet covers were on the battlefield.



Totenkopf troops during the opening phase of 'Operation Zitadelle' in July 1943. Here in this photograph a mortar crew move forward across the vast open Russian plain of the Kursk salient. Within an hour of the attack *Totenkopf*, *Das Reich* and *Leibstandarte* were embroiled in fierce fighting.

Even during the summe periods in Russia the weathe could grind a division to temporary halt in a heav downpour. In this photograp this *Totenkopf* crew of a BM R75 motorcycle combinatio are experiencing problem following a freak rainstor during 'Operation Zitadelle' July 1943. Note the tactic markings painted in white o the front of the sidecar. There an 'S' painted above the symb for the second company.

At Kursk a *Totenkopf* commander raises his right arm to signify to his men to move forward. This photograph vividly illustrates how well the soldiers camouflage smocks and helmet covers blended with the local terrain in July 1943. The use of camouflaged clothing in the Waffen-SS reduced casualties by some 15 percent. However, due to their fighting techniques, which sometimes led them to be over zealous on the battlefield, this significantly decreased their chances of not being injured or killed.

One of the most commo sights seen in Russia by a German forces was the terribl road surface. Here soldier from *Totenkopf* struggle t move a BMW R12 motorcycl combination that ha unavoidably become bogge down in a sandy road. O interest is the *Totenkop* emblem painted on the side o the front mudguard along wit the white number '23' on th side of the fuel tank. Th motorcycle is being driven b an SS-*Rottenführer* who i wearing the Iron Cross Secon Class ribbon.

A two-man MG37(t) machine gun team in action against an unidentified Soviet target. Both these *Totenkopf* men have equipment and uniforms typical of this period in the war. The firepower of the Waffen-SS and the *Wehrmacht* was one of the important factors in overwhelming the Red Army throughout the entire war.

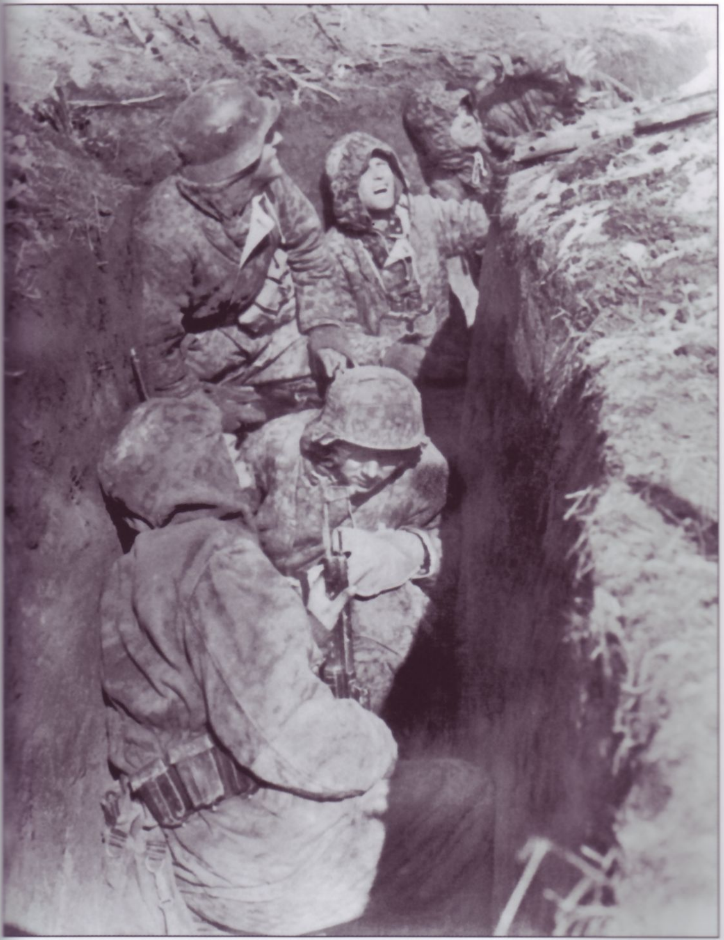
A well-camouflaged MG34 machine gun team poised for action in a forest. Note the soldier, probably the squad leader, scouring the dense undergrowth ahead through binoculars, trying to deduce the location of the enemy target. A machine gun crew usually consisted of five men – the squad leader, machine gunner, and ammunition feeder plus two infantrymen to help carry spare ammunition.

A single column of *Totenkopf* troops advance through a swamp infested forest clearing during 'Operation Zitadelle'. One soldier can visibly be seen wearing a mosquito net in order to protect himself against the plagues of insects during the summer of 1943. By this period of the battle *Totenkopf* and its two fellow Waffen-SS divisions mopped up the remaining Soviet resistance in the area throughout and regrouped in readiness for the delivery of what they thought would be the final and decisive blow.

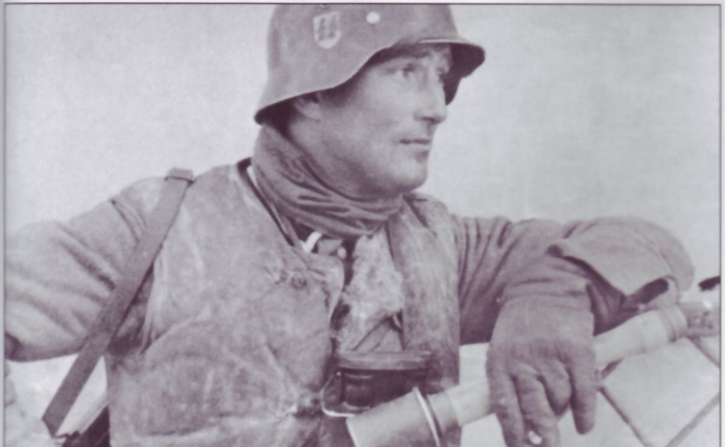
Looking through his gun-sight an MG34 machine gunner and feeder in action during the last phase of 'Operation Zitadelle'. If the enemy fire is not adequate, a few bursts from this machine gun will suppress any enemy activity. When facing a German machine gun team supplied with plenty of ammunition, Russian units had a difficult time, especially since their own supply of ammunition was often inadequate.

Waiting for orders. A group of *Totenkopf* soldiers rest in one of the many bomb craters that littered the landscape in the Kursk salient. They are all armed with the Mauser 98k rifle. Very often ammunition boxes were used to hold additional rounds for their rifles. With the extra amounts of ammunition available it helped turn back Soviet assaults.

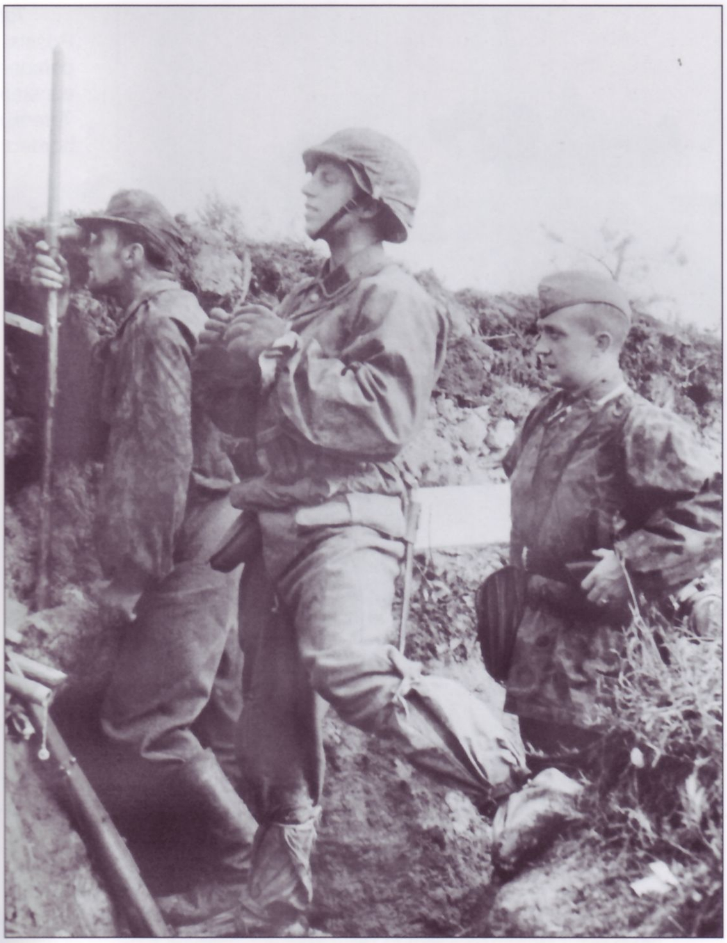
A Motor Transport driver holding the rank of SS-*Rottenführer* repairs a puncture to his vehicle sometime during September 1943. By the end of the spring of that year, *Totenkopf* together with the other premiere SS divisions had proven their worth in combat. However, 'Operation Zitadelle' had caused such severe losses that both men and equipment could not be adequately replaced.



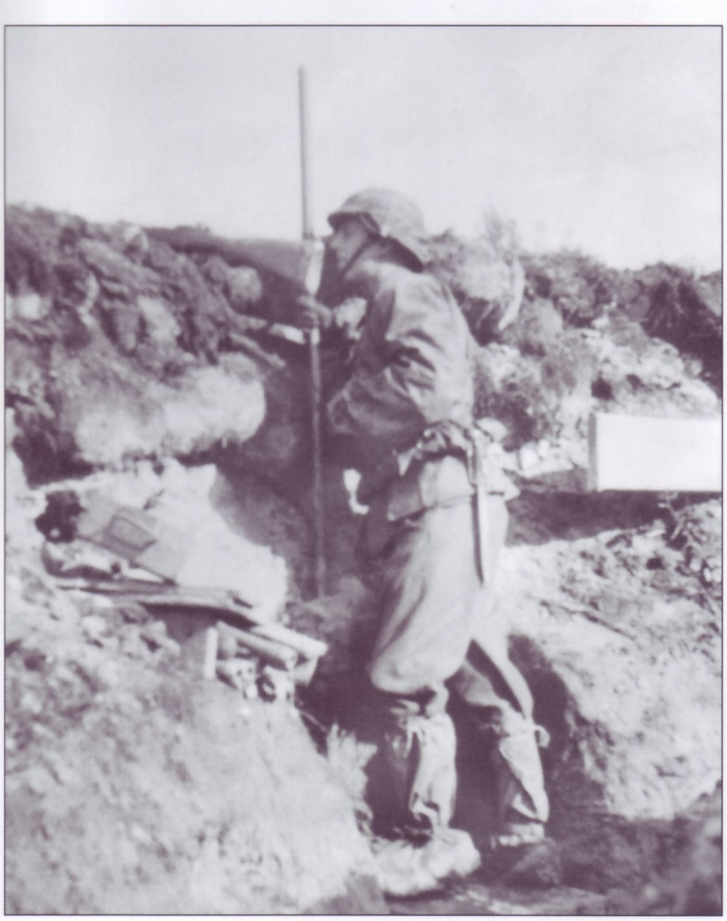
A group of *Totenkopf* grenadiers huddle inside a slit trench whilst under aerial attack by Red Army fighter aircraft. These men are all dressed typically for this period with early style 'Plane Tree' pattern camouflage smocks. The fourth man furthest from the camera holds the rank of an *Unterscharführer.*



A *Totenkopf* grenadier wearing what appears to be a sheepskin garment over his tunic. The soldier's M35/40 helmet bears the single decal. He is wearing the toque pulled around his neck and he is armed with an M1920 stick grenade.

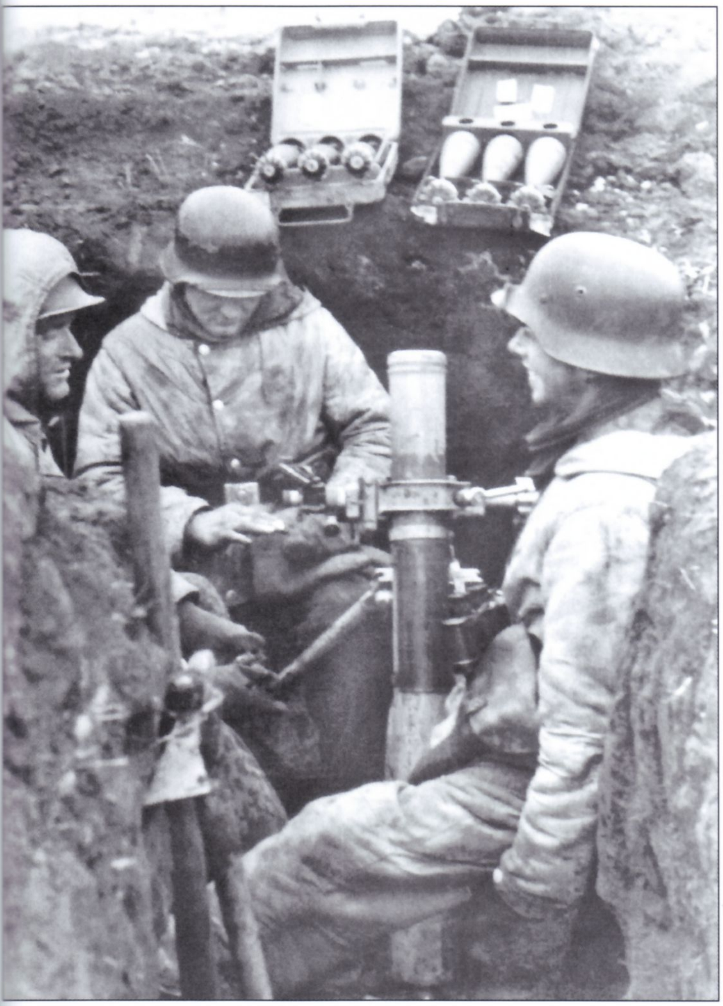


Two photographs taken minutes between each other and show troops inside a trench overlooking enemy positions. The soldiers are using a mirror periscope sight to observe Soviet targets. A Mauser 98k rifle can be seen perched in position on top of the trench, ready at a moment's notice.

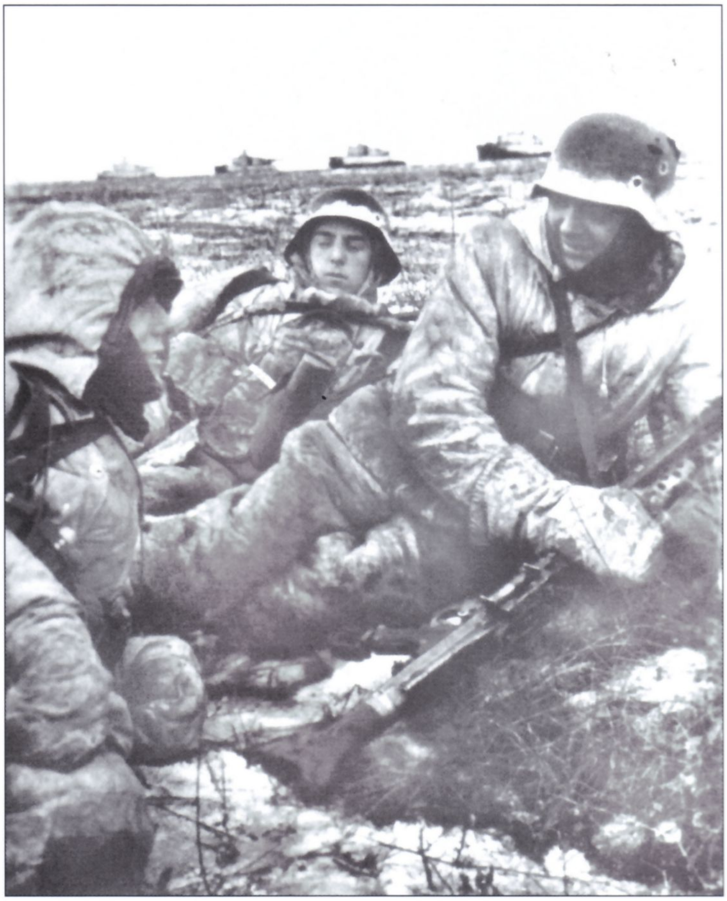


Totenkopf troops have halted their advance across the wide expanse of Wester Russia in February 1944. Behind the two men is an Sd.Kfz.251 halftrack armore personnel carrier. The winter and spring of 1944 was characterized by a series constant withdrawals from one natural barrier to another, which subsequently pushe *Totenkopf*, other elite Waffen-SS formations, and German army forces back to th borders of Western Russia. The soldier on the left is armed with an MP44 assault rifle.

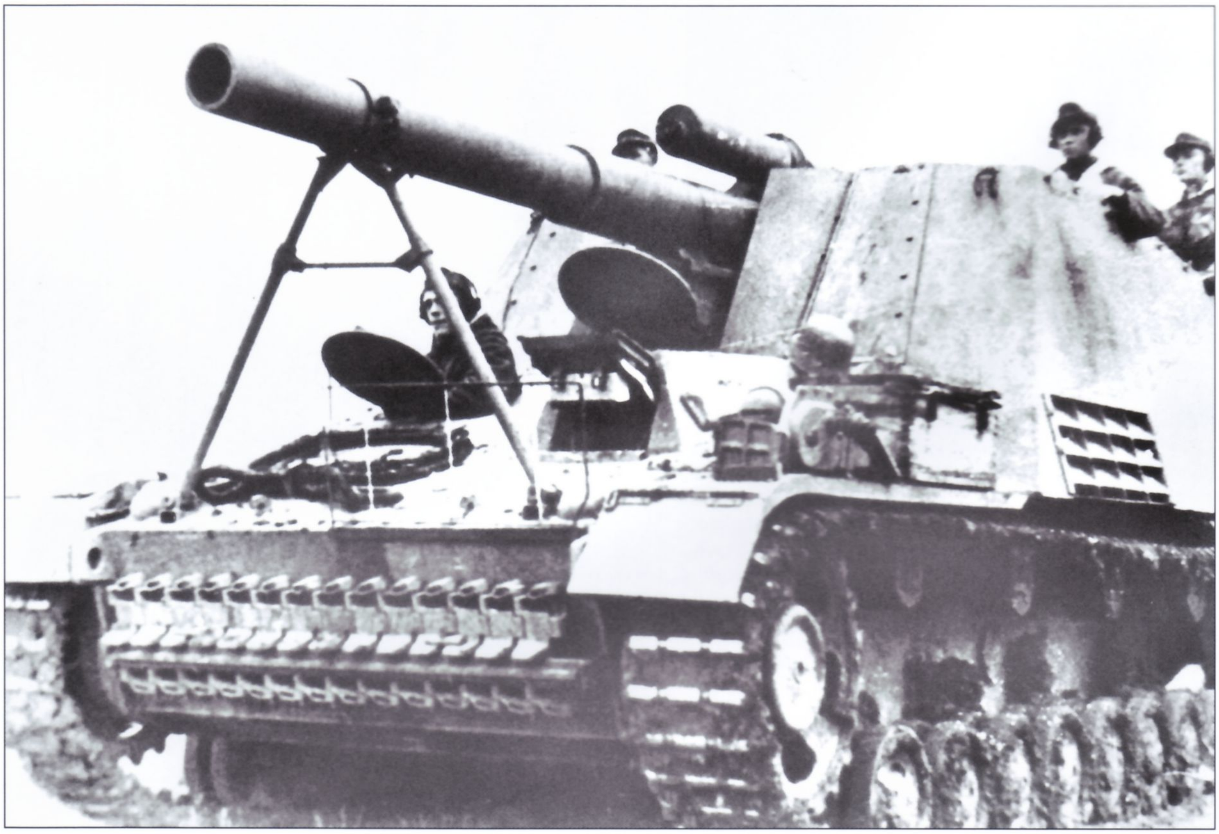
Curious *Totenkopf* grenadiers examine a knocked out Soviet KV-1 tank. Both th men standing on the tank are wearing the winter uniform that include gray overcoats wit hoods lined with white fur. The bulkiness of their thick coats and trousers attest to th severity of the cold weather. However, the grenadier standing nearest to the camer appears unperturbed by the arctic temperature, and is wearing no overcoat.



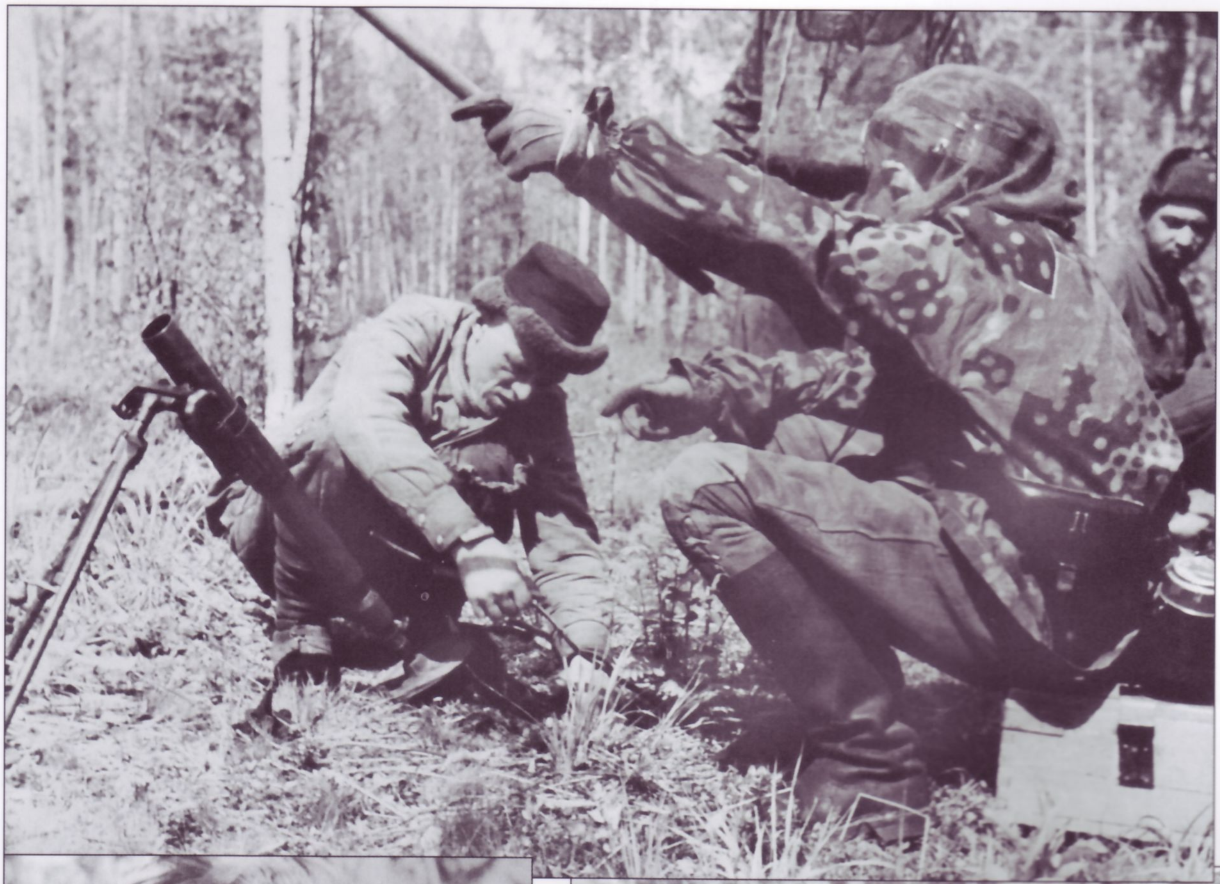
A 8cm *Granatwerfer* 34 manned by *Totenkopf* troops during a lull in the fighting near the Bug River in March 1944. Both Waffen-SS and *Wehrmacht* soldiers found that the use of the mortar gave them – both in attack and defence – a valuable high explosive capability beyond the range of rifles or hand grenades.



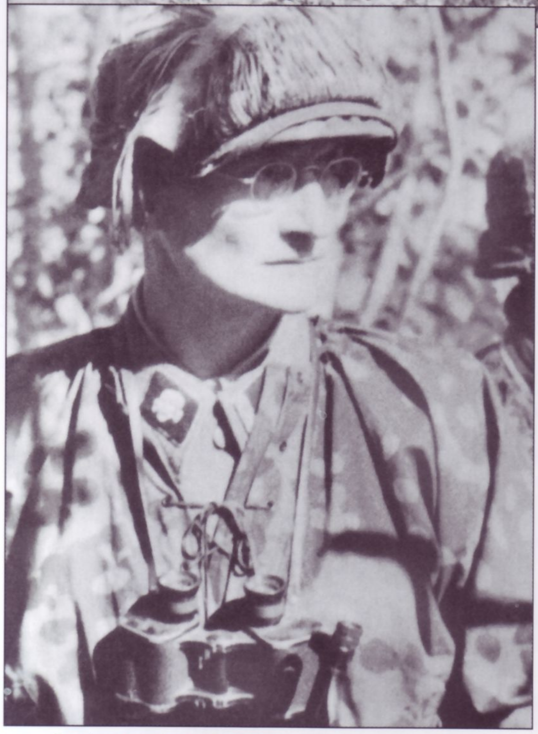
An MG34 machine gun crew wearing padded reversible winter uniforms white side. Note how the constant wear of these garments have discoloured them with dirt and grime from the battlefield. This photograph was taken in March 1944. It was during the first week of March that *Totenkopf* fought along the Bug River in a desperate attempt to slow the rapid advance of the Red Army. However, the position on the Bug soon collapsed and *Totenkopf* together with the rest of H.Gr.Süd fell back on the River Dniester, the border between the Soviet Union and Romania. In the background, four Tiger I's can be seen in a hull down position behind the crest of a hill.



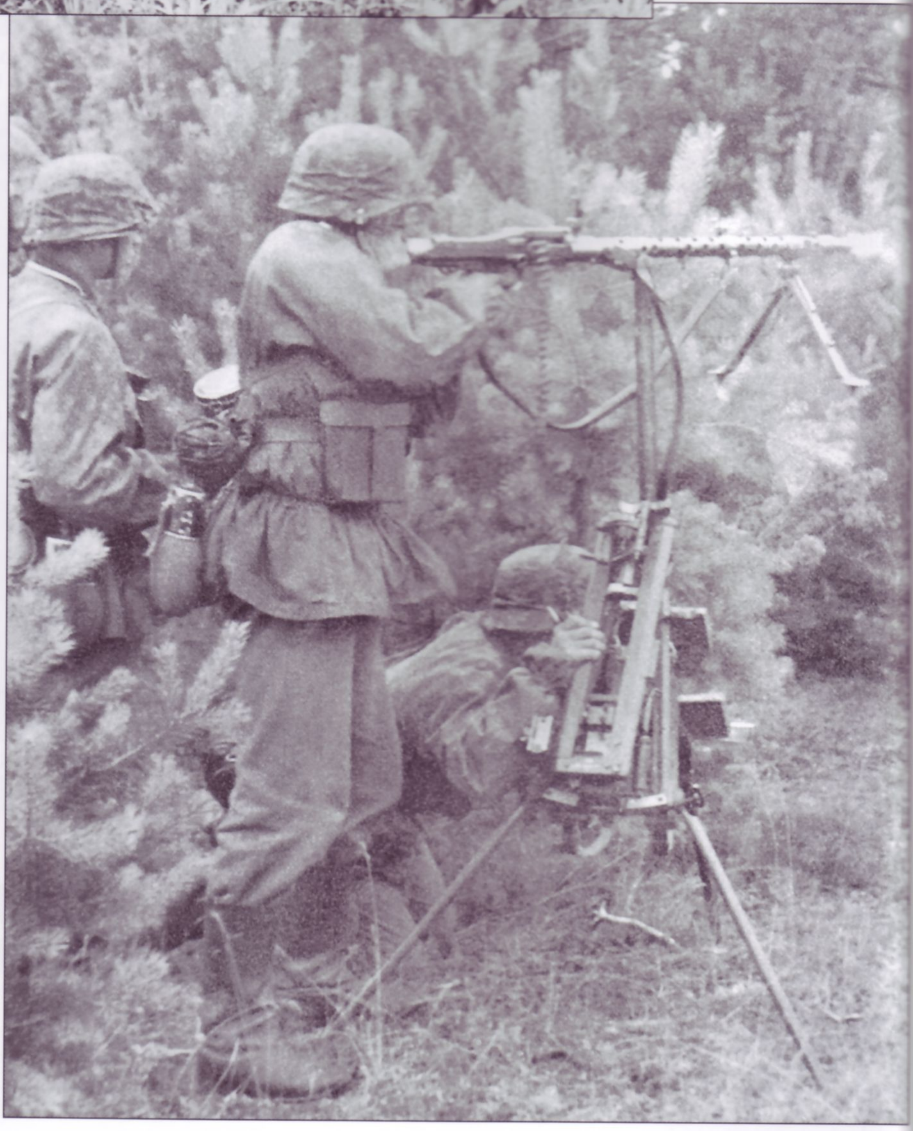
A Hummel self-propelled gun mounting a 15cm FH18 field howitzer on the chassis of a Pz.Kpfw.IV. This vehicle has received an application of winter whitewash paint. It formed the single mobile heavy field artillery battery for *Totenkopf* from the spring of 1943, and proved a useful and popular weapon. Here at last was a deadly artillery piece that could fight at a pace of the Panzers. This Hummel was assigned to 1.Panzer-Division in Russia.



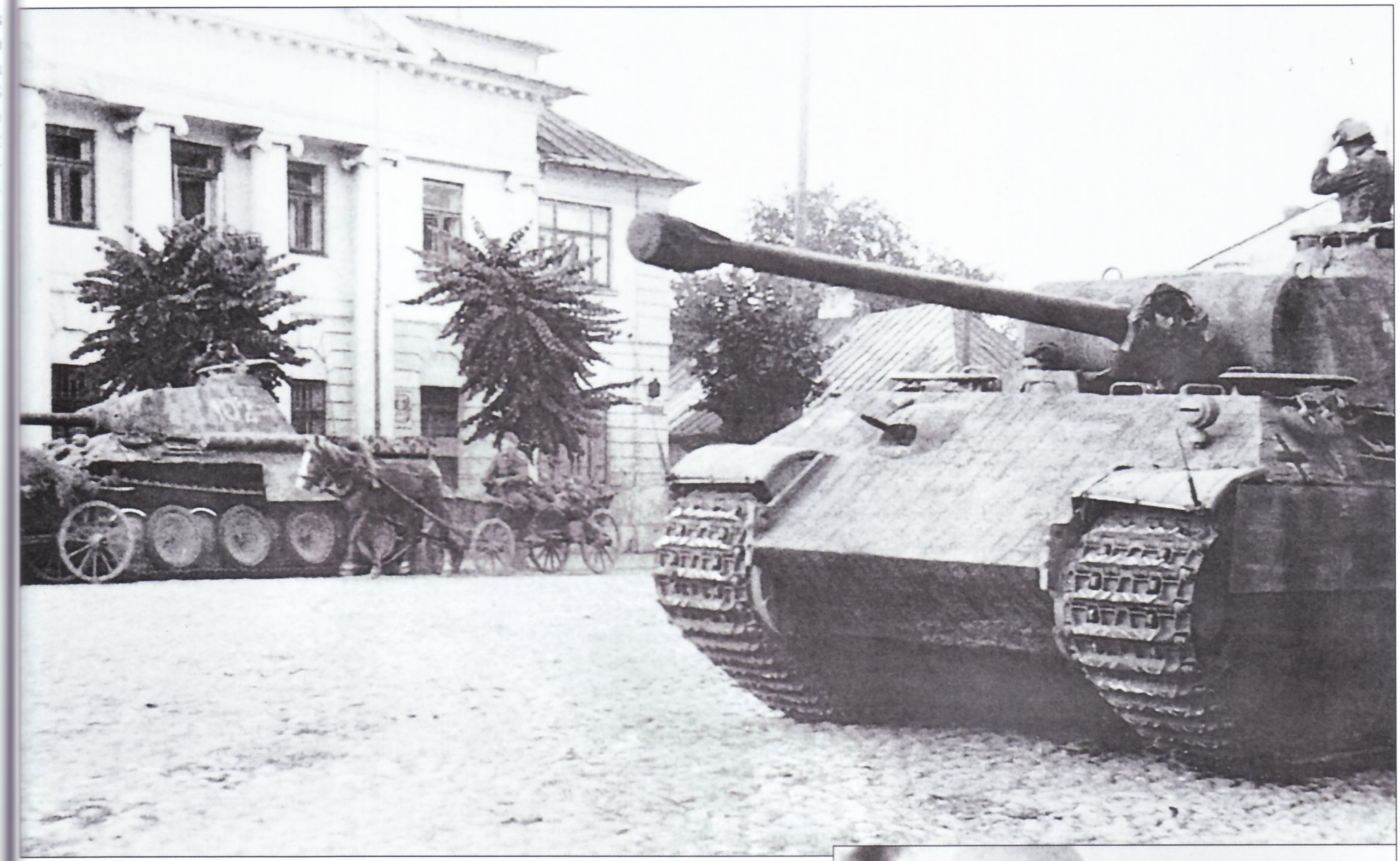
Totenkopf soldiers teach Ukrainian volunteers how to use a mortar. By 1943 – SS *Reichsführer* Heinrich Himmler decided that western Ukraine – ancient Galicia – was sufficiently 'Aryan' to allow its men to fight alongside and even enter the Waffen-SS. Although the bulk of Ukrainian soldiers were recruited into the newly created Galician SS-Division, there were a number of recruits that were trained by the premiere SS divisions to serve as special commando units behind Soviet Army lines.



An interesting photograph showing a *Totenkopf* soldier holding the rank of SS-*Haupsturmführer*, with a camouflage face mask on his helmet. This soldier is wearing an early pattern camouflage smock and helmet cover in a 'Plane Tree' pattern, probably with field gray trousers tucked in puttees over laced up ankle boots.

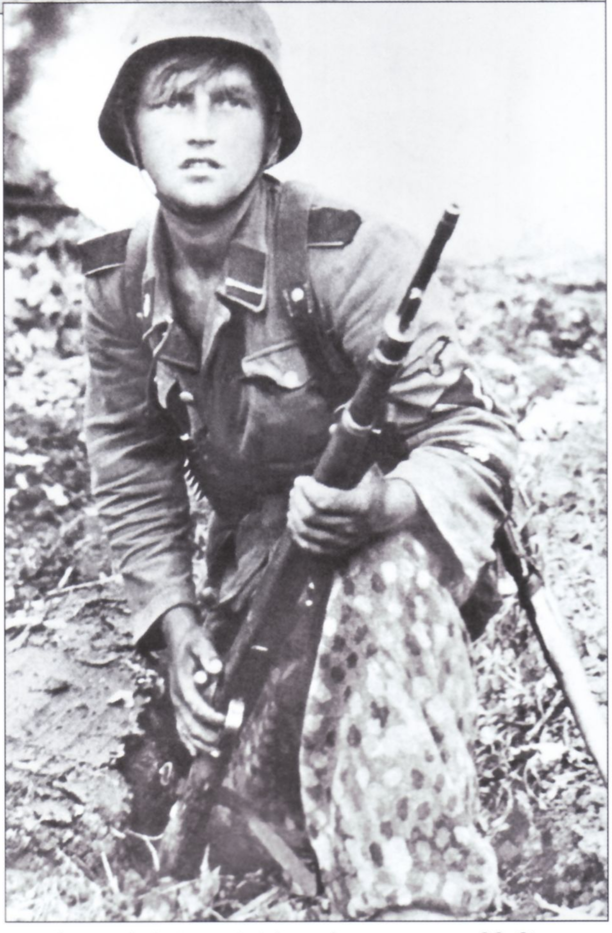


An MG34 machine gun team goes into action using a Dreifuss 34 antiaircraft tripod mount for long range firing. Throughout the war both the MG34 and 42 were used with great success in both offensive and defensive roles. They had excellent handling qualities and tremendous rates of fire. The enemy quickly came to appreciate and fear them.



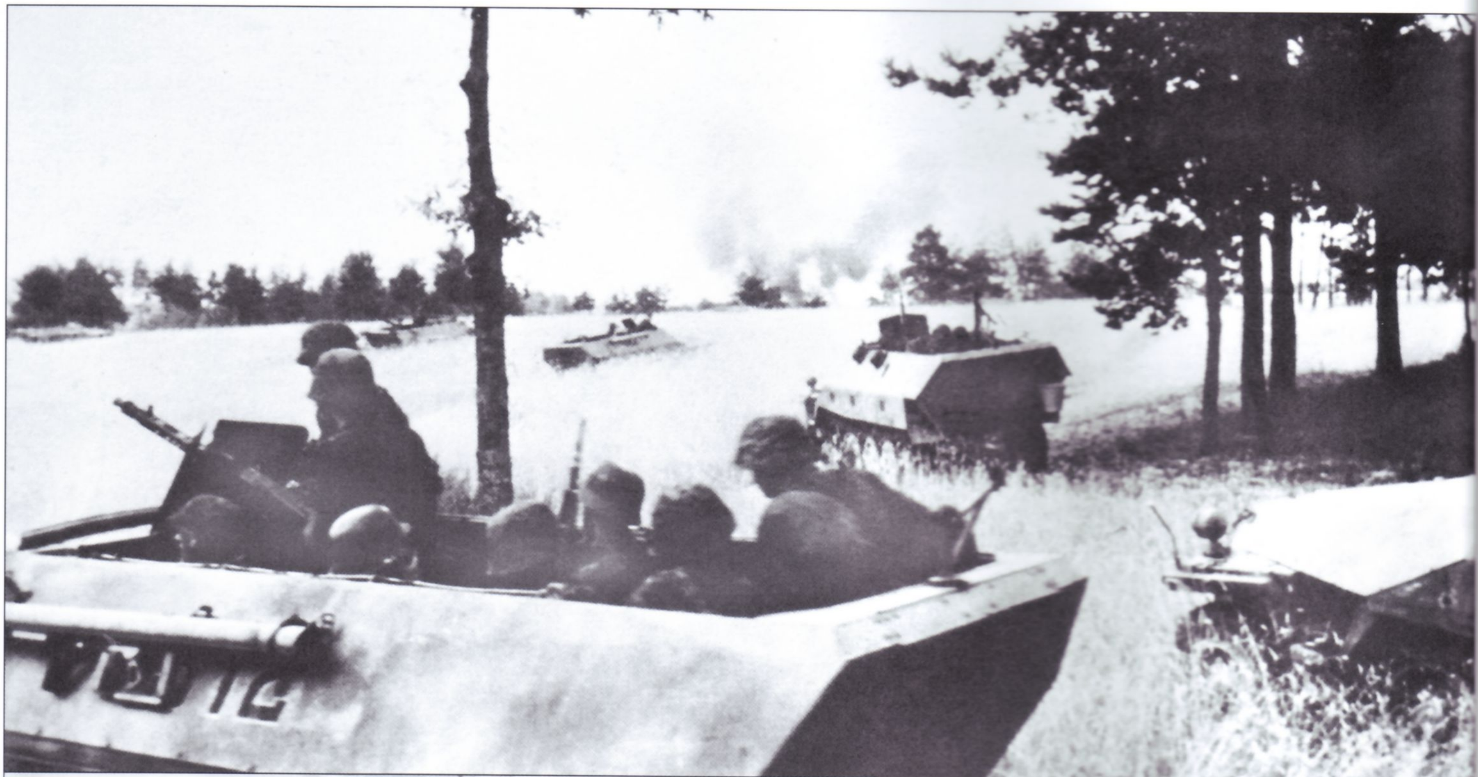
Two *Totenkopf* Pz.Kpfw.V Panther's halt inside an unidentified square in the East during the summer of 1944. Both tanks have received a coating of Zimmerit antimagnetic mine paste and are painted in summer camouflage schemes. The Panther in the background is a command tank and has the digital numbers 'I02' painted in red with a white outline on the side of its turret. In October 1943 *Totenkopf* was converted to a Panzer-Division, albeit in name only. By 1944 it started receiving the new Panther tanks as replacements.

Totenkopf troops move along a forest path passing a dead Russian soldier. This photograph was taken in July 1944, and it was during this time that the Division was sent to the city of Grodno in Poland to hold the right flank of 4.Armee in the north. For 11 days, outnumbered seven to one in troops and ten to one in armor, *Totenkopf* held on. However, by 18 July it finally abandoned Grodno and withdrew west in the retreat towards Warsaw.



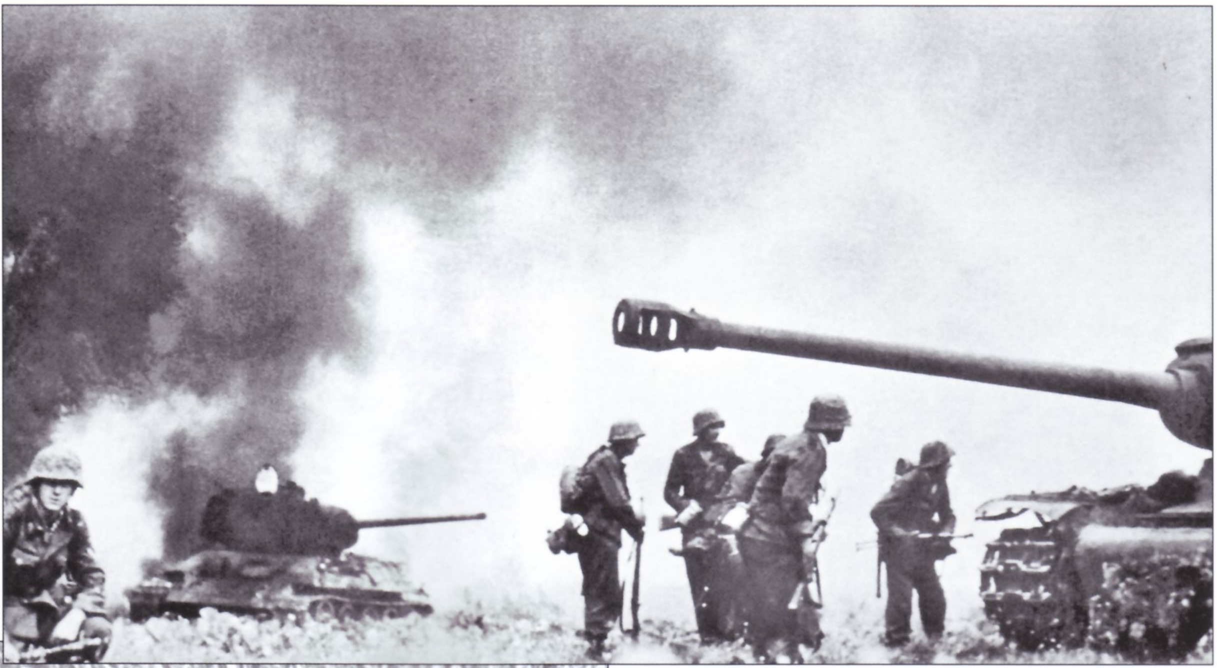
A posed photograph taken of a very young SS-*Sturmann* who is supposed to be waiting on the outskirts of Warsaw in August 1944. He is wearing the M44 camouflage drill uniform in the 'Dot' pattern, and M1943 tunic with the field gray collar. Note the *Totenkopf* cuff band, which were discontinued in 1943, but still being worn here.

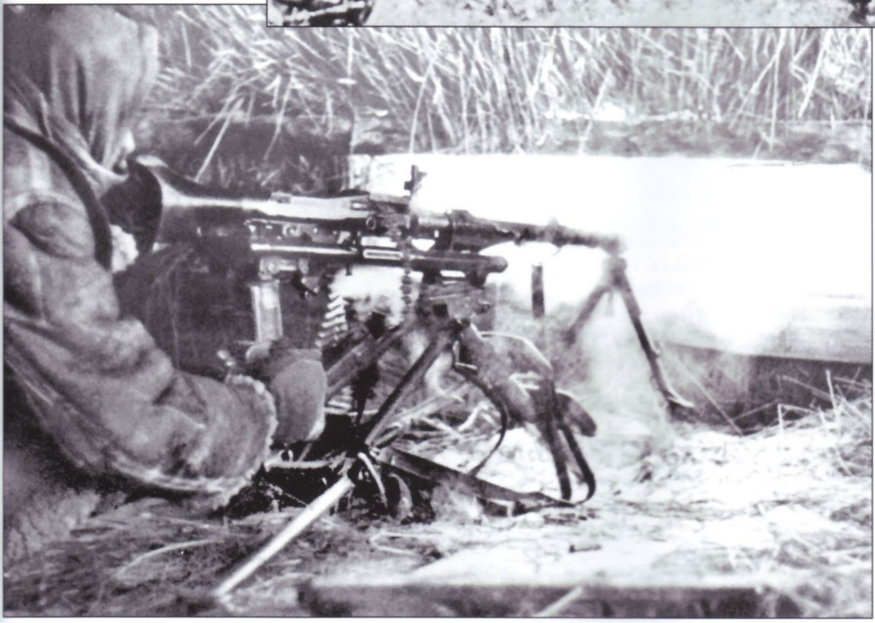
Two photographs showing *Totenkopf* MG42 machine gun teams in action during operations around Warsaw in August 1944. The quality of the MG42 machine gun lay at the core of the formidable defensive reputation that the Waffen-SS gained during the latter stages of the war. Tactics and techniques designed around the prowess of the machine gun. As long as a crew could keep their machine gun operational with good fields of fire, they had considerable defensive staying power. It was this reason that SS machine gun teams could hold up attacking infantry many times their numbers.



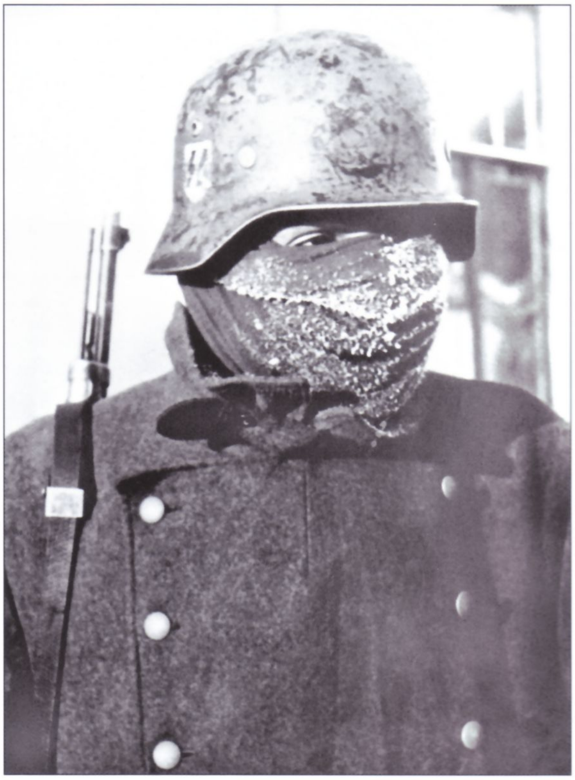
Two photographs, this time, showing *Totenkopf* grenadiers in action in Poland in August 1944. In the first photograph Sd.Kfz.251/1 Ausf.D halftracks can be seen moving through a field laden with grenadiers preparing to dismount and go into action. The use of halftracks by the SS Panzer-Grenadier-Regiments gave the Germans tactical superiority over motorized Soviet infantry despite their overwhelming numbers. In the second photograph a grenadier is clearing out enemy positions with an M1920 stick grenade, prior to its unit dismounting from the halftrack.

Totenkopf grenadiers seen here using a Russian JS-2 as cover following a successful attack against a Soviet armored column. In the background a Russian T-34/85 tank is ablaze.

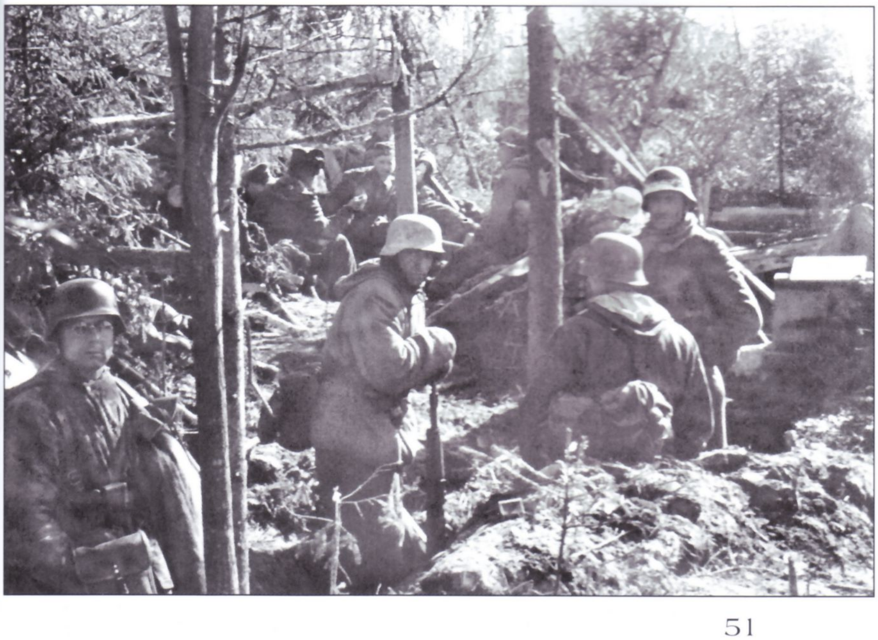




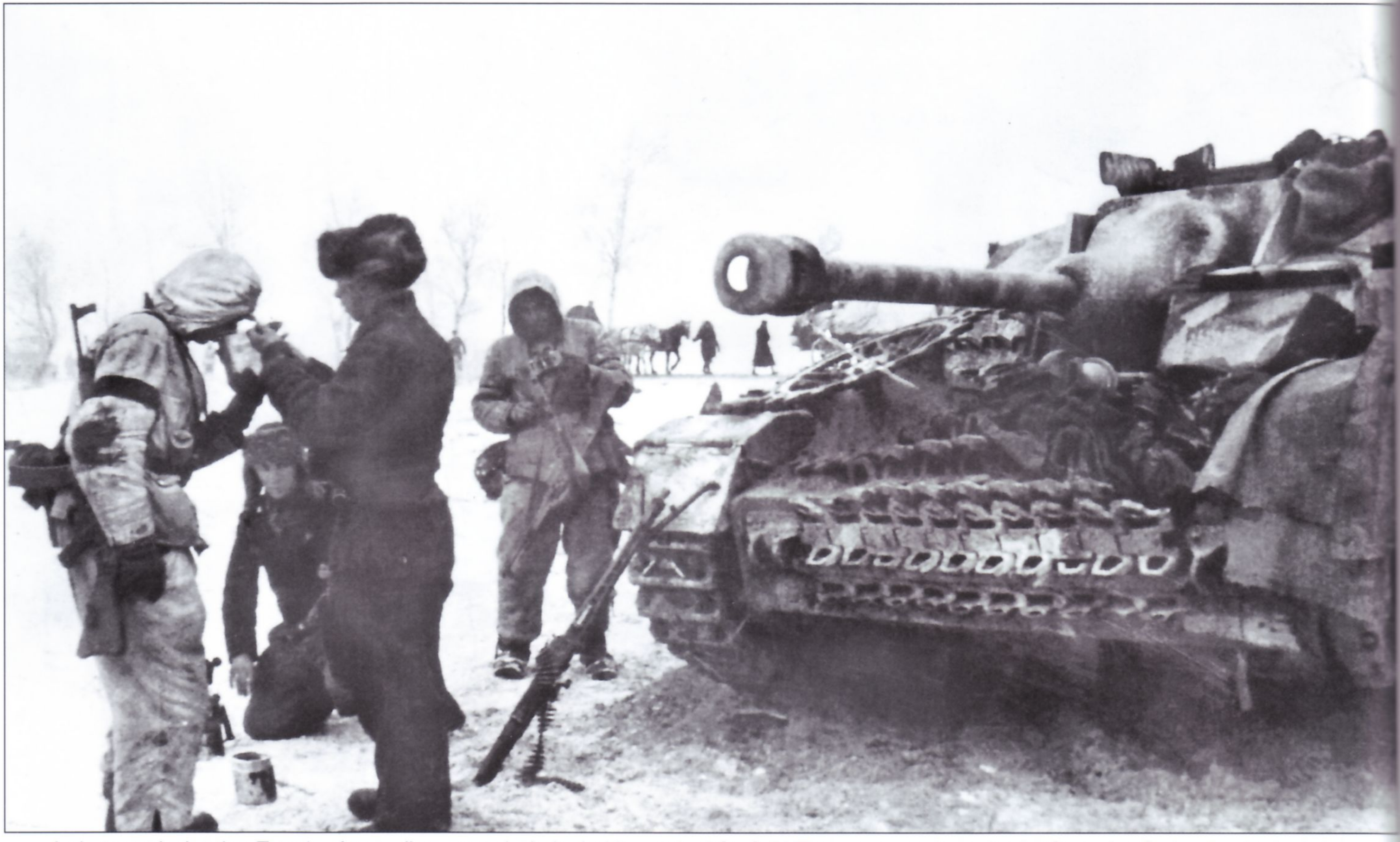
A machine gunner with his MG34 machine gun mounted on a tripod opens fire against a Soviet target. The gunner is wearing civilian-style winter clothing over a standard uniform. He's also wearing a toque with no steel helmet. This photgraph was taken during *Totenkopf's* attack towards Budapest in early January 1945.



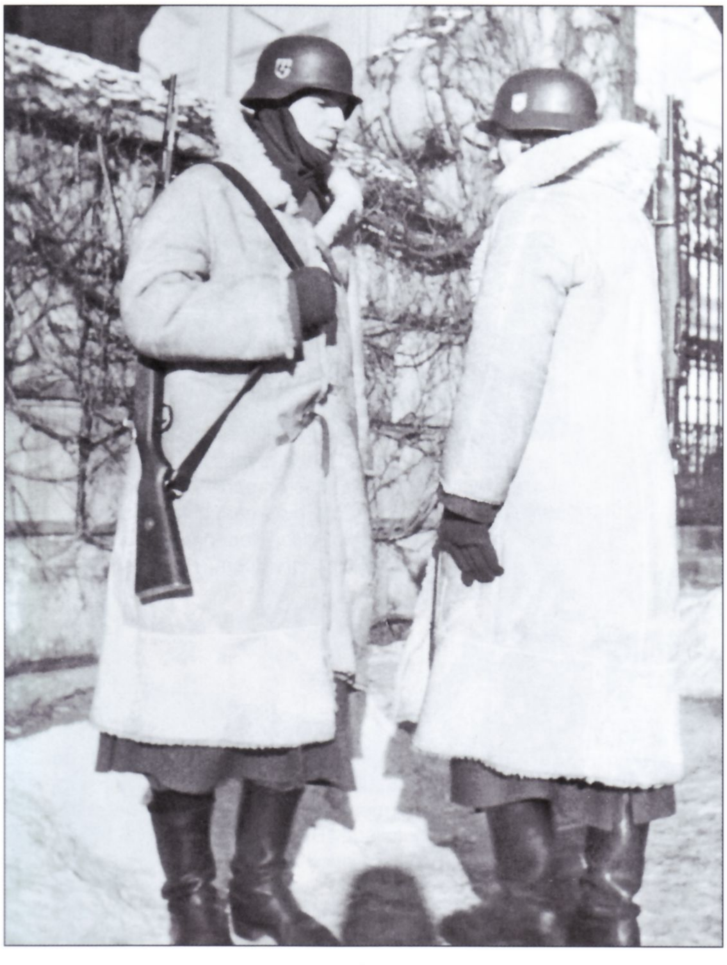
A *Totenkopf* soldier in the depths of a Hungarian winter in January 1945. This man is probably on guard duty and is trying to combat the cold by wearing his toque wrapped around his face. He is also wearing a M35/40 helmet uncovered and early type greatcoat. He is armed with a Mauser 98k rifle.

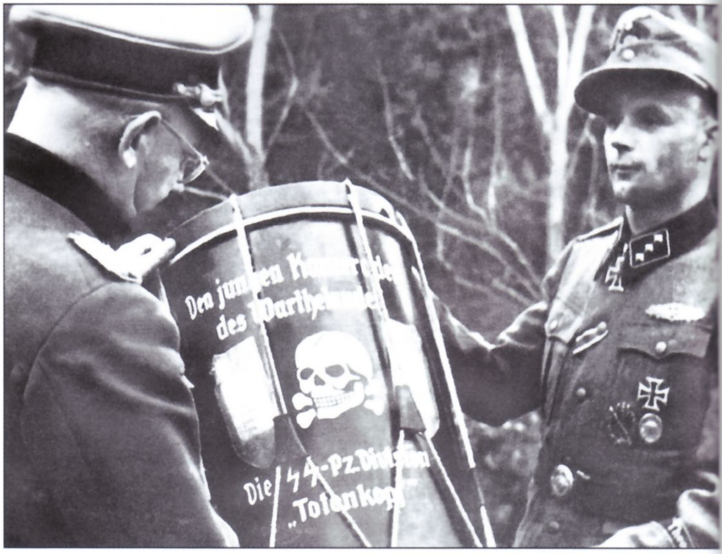


Totenkopf soldiers dug-in inside a forest outside Budapest in March 1945. They are wearing their reversible padded winter garments gray side and blend well against the surrounding foliage. By mid-March, the 6.SS-Panzer-Armee offensive was halted due to strong Soviet resistance. The 9th Guards Tank Army then smashed into the *Totenkopf*-Division that had taken-up defensive positions outside the Hungarian capital.



A photograph showing *Totenkopf* grenadiers around a halted white washed StuG.IV. They are preparing to begin 'Operation Spring Awakening', the codename to drive the Soviets from the last oilfields in German possession, knocking them back across the Danube and retaking Budapest. The men are wearing a variety of adapted winter clothing including reversible grey/white padded camouflage garments. Note the two soldiers with fur covered caps. The offensive opened on 6 March 1945 in heavy snow. The grenadiers are being supported by a StuG.IV, which has received an application of winter whitewash paint.





An officer holding the rank of *Untersturmführer* of the 'Theodor Eicke' Regiment presents a decorated drum built by the *Hitlerjugend* to the *Totenkopf's* commander, SS-*Brigadeführer* Hellmuth Becker in early 1945. Hellmuth Becker was *Totenkopf's* last commander and was as utterly ruthless as Theodor Eicke had been. However, unlike Eicke, Becker was an alcoholic and was seen sometimes by his men on the battlefield drunk. In spite of his heavy drinking he held the Division together through the final months of the war until he eventually surrendered his beloved *Totenkopf* to the American 3rd Army on 9 May 1945.

Totenkopf troops on guard duty in Hungary in February 1945. They are both wearing identical standard issue uniforms, with sheepskin coat, toques and uncovered M35/40 helmets. Note the later-war SS rune decal painting on the right side of the soldiers slate-gray helmet.

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